LETTERS

OF AN

ITALIAN NUN

AND AN

ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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AND AN

ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

Tranſlated from the FRENCH of

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

Il cor gradiſce;
E ſerve a lui chi 'l ſuo dover compiſce.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDO[illegible]
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BRITISH MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION.

Extract of a Letter to the EDITOR, *dated* Chamberry, *in* Savoy, *Jan.* 7, 1780.

" ——THE original manuſcript, whoſe imperfect tranſlation I take the liberty to ſend you, is in the poſſeſſion of a gentleman in this neighbourhood, to whom I was preſented by our common friend the Marquis de Bellegarde.——He was ſo obliging as to lend it me for my peruſal, and, on

my propoſing its publication, he informed me that it had been ſent to the Editors of the poſthumous edition of Rouſſeau's works, now preparing for the preſs, who excuſed themſelves from receiving it, becauſe no ſuch work was named among thoſe which he intended ſhould appear after his death. However, I have obtained the liberty to tranſlate and give it to my country.

" Rouſſeau paſſed a conſiderable time in this gentleman's family, and, during his abode there, was continually amuſing himſelf with his pen, the productions whereof he left behind him by the deſire of his friend, who had ſo kindly received and che-

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riſhed him.---They chiefly conſiſt of little tender pieces of poetry, and many of them poſſeſs that delicious colouring and affecting ſentiments which he ſo well knew how to give to any thing, and to every thing.--- Among theſe were the following Letters, written, to all appearance, without much attention, and, perhaps, as the firſt ſketch of a deſign which he intended to have rendered more complete and important. They will, however, be found to contain, though in an inferior degree, the ſimplicity of ſtory, the deluſive improbabilities, the enchanting tenderneſs, the expreſſive language, and the romantic virtue, of his other works. That much of their origi-

nal merit will be evaporated in my Tranſlation, I well know;---indeed I feel and perceive it. Fidelity is all I can boaſt.---On that, at leaſt, you may depend; and, if the ſenſe be preſerved, you have my leave and requeſt to make any alteration in the expreſſion which your ear or your heart may dictate. The title is my own; for the manuſcript does not poſſeſs a name, but is introduced with the Italian line which preſerves its place in the firſt page.

" The Marquis de Bellegarde is of opinion that the ſtory has ſome foundation in truth, and has been turning his thoughts, but in vain, to the recollection of an unpleaſant hiſ-

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tory of this kind, which happened, as he thinks, many years ago, when he was in England. You will perceive that the name of the gentleman who is the ſuppoſed writer of a great part of theſe letters, is an Engliſh one, though diſguiſed by the French manner of ſpelling, and might lead to a diſcovery of the event which, as the Marquis imagines, gave Rouſſeau his ſubject. It is of that ſingular nature as to have made ſome noiſe at the time it happened, both in England and Italy, and, from its circumſtances, not unlikely to have reached the citizen of Geneva during his reſidence at Venice. It is alſo that ſpecies of ſtory which would come home to ſuch a boſom

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as his, and might have been intended to form the ground-work for ſome exertion of his ſenſibility, which yielded to objects wherein his feelings were more deeply intereſted, or might be loſt in the fancied miſery of his future life:---a miſery that every humane mind muſt pity; and, with all its eccentricities, who is there will avow that he does not reſpect it?

"In conſigning this manuſcript to your care, I do it the juſtice which I think it deſerves; and, in deſiring you to give it to the world, I ſhall do the world no diſſervice. In an age like this, when the preſs teems with works of trifling entertainment,

tainment, to ſay no worſe, and every provincial town has its circulating library, it is, in ſome degree, benefiting ſociety to preſent it with publications which, while they bear the ſeducing titles of Romances and Novels, convey a moral, and call forth feelings which that ſpecies of compoſition does not always poſſeſs or create. If ſenſibility is a principle fruitful in virtues; if it promotes the love of our fellow-creatures; if it is the antidote of frivolouſneſs, coquettry, and ſelfiſhneſs; why ſhould not its empire be extended? And what ſenſe can there be in oppoſing a kind of writing whoſe tender and affecting melancholy gives to the penſive mind

mind a ſource of delicious ſympathy? *Malheureux qui raiſonne toûjours, & ne ſent jamais que les defauts!*

"I have ſeen indeed ſome, and not a few, of thoſe works which are called ſentimental, that, without poſſeſſing any thing like nature or moral, have been able to pleaſe and affect a certain ſpecies of weak, romantic, unreflecting readers. The whole of their merit conſiſts in long-ſpun apoſtrophes of love and diſappointment, forced deſcriptions of happineſs and miſery; while panting hope, trembling fear, frantic deſpair, and unutterable joy, are ſometimes to be found in the ſame page.

This

This work, I truſt, will bear another and a more favourable deſcription.——Rouſſeau, in the preface to his Eloiſa, has declared that the unmarried woman who reads that work is undone: and, on concluding the peruſal of this imperfect but intereſting offspring of the ſame pen, it will be obſerved, by the reflecting reader, that the young unmarried woman, who ſuffers herſelf to commence an epiſtolary correſpondence with a man of her own age, is guilty of a great imprudence; but that, if ſhe writes one letter to him on the ſubject of Love, ſhe riſques her undoing. Theſe are truths of no ſmall importance to female youth and the guardians of it.

" That

"That this may be found inferior to the other tranſlated works of its celebrated author, I will readily acknowledge:---but ſtill it was originally written by Rouſſeau; and I ſhall not diſgrace it by any apology of mine. It is ſaid that the gally-pots painted by Raphael are held in high eſtimation by thoſe who moſt ardently admire the diſtinguiſhed productions of that ſublime pencil, which has given to its maſter a name that will never die."———

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LETTERS

LETTERS

OF AN

Italian Nun and an *Engliſh* Gentleman, *&c. &c.*

LETTER THE FIRST.

To ISABELLA.

IF I could believe for a moment, that your eyes had not read the language of mine, or that it were poſſible for your heart to be a ſtranger to the tumults of my breaſt, I ſhould not have had

had the courage to addreſs you, till hopeleſs paſſion had affected my reaſon, when, perhaps, you would have been alarmed for a moment with the laſt complaint of my deſpair.

It is true, lovely Iſabella, that my lips never unfolded to you the feelings of my ſoul; but in the communication of lovers there is a more affecting language than words can form. To a mind of your ſenſibility, the expreſſive look, the heaving ſigh, the timid ſilence, will be more intelligible, and ſooner felt, than all the proteſtations which the tongue can utter; and when I have been before your grate, ſuch a language of ſincere and reſpectful paſſion muſt have reached you. This letter, therefore, will not ſurprize you: the inſtant your eyes have fallen upon the name that is ſubſcribed to it, your heart

will

will announce its contents; you will know the errand of the meſſenger before it is told; and, if you ſhould feel any tender impulſe before the declaration of my diſtreſs has awakened your pity, I ſhall be the happieſt and moſt honoured of men. Ah, Iſabella! happineſs, reaſon, every bleſſing of life, nay, life itſelf depends upon you; and, ſurely, you were not formed for deſtruction!

LETTER THE SECOND.

To the ſame.

I HAVE waited an age and you have not anſwered my letter: perhaps you never mean to anſwer it. If I have been guilty of preſumption, be kind for once and tell me ſo: do not, I beſeech you, conceal from me the judgment you have paſſed on my crime, that I may haſte to breathe my laſt groan in your ſight; and be a melancholy but perfect proof, that, if I was not worthy of your kindneſs, I did not deſerve your cruelty. Mine is not the paſſion of an hour; I did not yield to it till every trial of reaſon, abſence, and variety, were found to be in vain: I then ſubmitted to a deſtiny which is irreſiſtible; a deſtiny which might be happy, and may, perhaps will, be miſerable. You, Iſabella,

bella, are the miſtreſs of it; by your lips it muſt be pronounced, and I ſhall bend ſubmiſſively to their decrees, though I may not long ſurvive them.

I know the difficulties which oppoſe my paſſion; I ſee the natural impoſſibilities which ſtand between me and the object of my love, which, in ſpite of them all, encreaſes every minute;—a ſure and certain proof of its growing ſtrength, its powerful impulſe, and the vanity of oppoſition. I have ſtruggled againſt it as an enemy that would deſtroy me; I have fled from it as from an enemy I found too ſtrong for me; and, at length, I am forced to yield to it—muſt I ſay, as to an enemy who has conquered and bound me in chains from which death alone can deliver me! You, indeed, could change them into ſilken bands and flowery garlands; but you,

all gentle and lovely as you are, may wiſh to aid the tyrant, and to puniſh the crime of loving with that ſilence which will tell me I love in vain. I may find the avenues of your heart more impregnable than the walls of your convent: alas! it may prove a more arduous undertaking to bribe the firm reſolutions which guard them, than to melt the ſtern, unfeeling portreſs who locks you from the world.

It is what I owe to my own happineſs, to the duties of a life juſt begun, and the rank I hold in the world, to aim at poſſeſſing that object, without which there can be no happineſs for me; without which the influence of duty will be weakened, even while the means of performing it may laſt, and rank will be of no avail; without which my ſhort remaining life will be a

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ſcene of clouds and darkneſs. Hopeleſs miſery is not to be borne by human fortitude; and, if you turn from me, there will be but one remedy for my deſpair.

LETTER THE THIRD.

To Mr. CROLI.

IT was, I find, a vain hope that my entrance into this diſmal abode was to be the laſt chaſtiſement of my life; and that, having ſacrificed every hope of earthly happineſs, I ſhould remain uninterrupted in the painful labour of extracting conſolation from the faint and imperfect view of heavenly bleſſings. Alas! little did I think, and I know not how to credit the declaration, that a face wet with continual tears, and a form ſhrunk by Sorrow from the little grace it might once poſſeſs, could charm your affections, or awaken any other ſentiment in your breaſt than the pity of a moment. Recal your words, I beſeech you. It muſt have been in the delirium of

of a dream that you have written to me in a language which bears the marks of a troubled reaſon. Though born to be miſerable myſelf, Heaven, ſurely, will not augment its cruelty, and make me the inſtrument of its vengeance, in adding to the miſery of others. I implore you, Sir, not to think of continuing a correſpondence which muſt be fruitleſs; and I beſeech you not to write to me again, unleſs it be to tell me that your reaſon is returned, and that I ſhall hear from you no more *.

* Inconſiderate woman! would you preſerve your heart from the contagion which approaches you, write no more:—write again, and you are undone.

LETTER THE FOURTH.

To ISABELLA.

THE trial has been made, and proved ineffectual. I cannot promiſe even one poor endeavour to turn my thoughts from you: my eyes have but one direction, and my heart has but one impulſe. If my paſſion for you is a dream, I ſhould wiſh never to awake; if it ſhould be a reality, it will never be quenched but by the ſleep of Death.

Ah, lovely Iſabella! has Miſery, then, preſcribed the vows which you have taken?—Did Sorrow clothe that charming form in the ſnowy habit which covers it?—Did Deſpair lead you to the altar, where your happineſs has been ſacrificed?—Alas!—does your heart fondly regret ſome darling object, from which you

you are eternally ſeparated?—It muſt be ſo—it cannot be otherwiſe:—the gloom of your cell is not perpetual; it is ſometimes diſſipated by the remembrance of him you love, and its walls are accuſtomed to the whiſpers of his name.—If I have divined aright, do not hide the fatal ſecret from me.—I ſhall diſcover it, if my foreboding ſpirit has not diſcovered it already.—I ſee the deep colour of my misfortune.—Your family has ſtood between you and your affections; they have thrown you into your cloiſtered priſon, where love deſpairs, and from whence Hymen turns his flight.—Cruel, unnatural, and ſavage parents! whoſe laſt conſideration is the happineſs of your children, and who, in obedience to the dictates of a falſe and fooliſh pride, are content to bury them alive, with all their charms and graces about them, and con-

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ſign them, without regret, to the living tomb of monaſtic life.—Alas! alas! Iſabella is the child of ſuch parents:—ſhe has felt what I now feel; and the ſame regret which fills her eyes with tears, urges on my deſpair. But mine is a generous affection: my love is not founded on the hurry of impetuous paſſions; it reſts on the ſolid baſis of pure and celeſtial ſentiments; and, while I feel that my happineſs depends upon being united to you, I am equally ſenſible of the neceſſity that your happineſs ſhould depend upon me. My affection aſks a return; but if that cannot be given, my hopes are blaſted, but my regard will remain unalterable. I ſhall have every reaſon to deplore my fate; but I ſhall find none to complain of you. Nay, ſo pure is the flame that warms me, which gives life to every thought, and will, at length, con-

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ſume me, that it turns my mind, for a while, from the ſad ſcene before me, to aſk if I can do you good.—If your heart is irrevocably devoted to another,---alas! what am I going to write?---yes, too lovely Iſabella! if you cannot be mine, I ſhould rejoice to gild the cloſe of my life by bearing you to your wiſhes.—To ſee you poſſeſſed by another would break my heart; yet, for your ſake, I would be the inſtrument of my own deſtruction.—My laſt moments would be brightened by a ray of comfort, on the reflection that you were happy.

LETTER THE FIFTH.

The Anſwer.

IF I conſulted the cold, unfeeling oracles of cautious Prudence, (and, perhaps, it were better for me if I did conſult them,) I ſhould not have broke the reſolution I had taken of never writing to you again; and, though there is a ſtrange kind of romantic ſenſibility in your laſt letter, which ſhould awake ſuſpicion, I cannot but write once more to you, to offer my endeavours to ſooth it into reaſon, and recommend to you that ſobriety of reflection which may reſtore you to yourſelf, and turn your thoughts to ſome more ſubſtantial hopes of happineſs.

Alas! Love never reigned in my breaſt; that torturing deity did not conduct me to the priſon which I now inhabit: other

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and far different paſſions led me hither. I ſought the gloom of this cell, as an aſylum againſt the horrors of a marriage with the object of my deteſtation; from which I had no means of eſcaping but by cloathing myſelf in the habit in which you have ſeen me.

I was formed for the world, I was educated to live in it, and had already been admitted into ſome ſmall ſhare of its ſocieties; you will, therefore, imagine that the comforts of this ſolitude find their principal ſource in the reflection on the evil I have avoided:—if memory glances upon any other circumſtance of former pleaſure, my heart can ſcarce ſuſtain the poignant mortification;—my only ſatisfaction is accompanied with terror, and is like the joy of one, who, having been preſerved from imminent danger, finds the conſciouſneſs of immediate ſafety diſturbed

turbed by the recollection of the perils he has lately eſcaped. I have only to thank Heaven for having taken me from a ſituation where I muſt have been completely miſerable, to place me in a ſtate where I cannot be happy.

It is true that I am not formed for a monaſtic life; its offices are not congenial to my nature; my mind cannot confine itſelf within the walls that ſurround its miſtreſs; it is ever on the wing, and the more awful ſeaſons of prayer and devotion cannot reſtrain it: —nevertheleſs, I have made a ſolemn vow, which muſt not be broken; it is regiſtered in heaven, whoſe vengeance would juſtly purſue me, ſhould I diſſolve it. I have poſſeſſed, alas! unfortunately for me, thoſe means of inſtruction, which, in this country, young perſons of my age ſeldom attain: I have profited of them; and while they

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have qualified me to feel, in a greater degree, the miſery of my ſituation, they ought to ſtrengthen the power of reſiſting any temptations to break a vow which I believe to be of a ſacred nature.

Generous ſtranger! be content with the grateful eſteem which I offer to you. Think no more of me, I beſeech you. A gulph, which you can never paſs, is placed between us. If it can be any ſatisfaction to know that I do not love another, it is my wiſh to impart it to you. But let me, above all things, exhort you to leave this country; turn from its deluſions, and ſeek your native ſhores, where, amid the careſſes of your friends, and the duties of your ſtation, you will ſoon loſe the temporary image of beauty, which never had much to boaſt, and is now no more.

You are not yet arrived to that maturity when impreſſions take root in the mind,

mind, and laſt through life. The various objects which will excite your eſteem, and the important concerns which muſt awaken your attention, will aid the natural fickleneſs of your age, to get rid of an idea which you declare to be ſo tormenting to you. I alſo am young;—but, having no objects to invite my regard, and bound by one dull, unvarying line of duty, the impreſſions of my youth, ſuch as they are, promiſe to be thoſe of my life. My heart has no pleaſing expectations of relief; the melancholy which guards every avenue of it from the approach of joy will ſoon corrode it into inſenſibility: but till that period arrives, and my wiſhes are diſpoſed to haſten its approach, the idea of your generous nature will not be forgotten.

LETTER

LETTER THE SIXTH.

To ISABELLA.

YOU are guilty of a cruel injuſtice to thoſe charms which would render you the admiration of all mankind, if they were permitted to bleſs the world: —every feeling, every ſentiment of my nature, cries aloud, that the moment I am forgetful of them muſt be the laſt of my exiſtence.—Beautiful Iſabella! are you then formed for happineſs, and muſt you live in miſery?—ſo young, and without any hopes of relief from ſorrow but by chilling Inſenſibility?—ſo inſtructed, and yet doomed to think that the[illegible] are ſacred which render life at once miſerable and uſeleſs?

The greater part of your ſex, who bind themſelves by monaſtic vows, are happy in their ignorance, and, being taught to

conſider the world as full of danger and miſery, think themſelves bleſt in the covert to which they have fled for ſhelter; and find in the duties of religion a calm ſatisfaction which is not diminiſhed by the remembrance of other pleaſure:—but you, who were not intended for monaſtic life, whoſe mind was enlightened in order to take a part in the concerns of the world, who were formed by nature for a life of reaſon, reflection, and ſociety, you muſt poſſeſs far, far different feelings.—Oh, Iſabella, when the midnight Choir lifts up its voice, where are your thoughts, and what are your ſorrows! Amid your broken ſlumbers, what pleaſing object does Fancy ſometimes preſent to you, to add new diſappointment to your waking hours! Can a vow, which binds you to ſupport ſuch a life, be known in heaven? If ſo, it muſt be inſcribed in the celeſtial regiſtry

regiſtry as a crime rather than a virtue; as a bondage which it would be piety to break, and muſt be criminal to maintain.

Without entering into any arguments upon a matter which furniſhes ſo many, let me perſuade you to conſult your own reaſon, and before that tribunal examine the real force and tenor of that obligation into which you have entered. Alas! Reflection muſt ſicken at the rigours of a priſon, whoſe gate Freedom is not ſuffered to approach but to bear you to your grave. Memory, glancing over the ſcenes of the paſt, muſt act a buſy and tormenting part;—Hope, arrayed in all its viſionary colours, as it riſes to give a fancied glimpſe of pleaſure, is quenched in a moment.—Oh, Iſabella! when the ſighs break forth from your boſom, when the tears waſh away the bluſhes from

your cheek, wherefore do you ſigh, and why do you weep?

That I love you, and that the happineſs of my life, and life itſelf, is mingled with my paſſion, is moſt true; nevertheleſs, it depends upon your anſwer to this letter, whether the future knowledge of it is to be with-held from you.—If you are contented and at eaſe, my voice ſhall never waft a ſound to interrupt your repoſe, nor ſhall you again ſee in my changed and diſtracted form the triumphs of your beauty;—but if you are wretched, let me offer to you the means of being happy.

LETTER THE SEVENTH.

The Anſwer.

YOUR queſtions reach my heart:—I tell you again, as I have already told you, that I am not happy. I will go ſo far as to aſſure you, that I never expected happineſs in this aſylum; and will once more repeat, that I ſought it to ſhelter me from a greater evil. Under the idea of ſuch a privilege, and, at the time, I thought it a great one, I took the vow which has wedded me to this cell for ever, with an unfeigned ſincerity. I thanked Heaven with the moſt perfect gratitude for thus delivering me from the object of my hatred, and I bid adieu to a world which contained him with a moſt ardent ſatisfaction. Whatever ſentiments, therefore,

might ſucceed, when the ſenſe of immediate danger was paſſed; and whatever inroads diſcontent might make upon my mind, when the hurry of deliverance began to ſubſide; I cannot conceive that the ſolemnity of my engagements is leſſened, or the obligations by which I have bound myſelf and my life have loſt an atom of their force. This is a ſituation, I muſt confeſs, wherein the heart might exert its power of deceiving with great advantage; but I am aware of the danger, and ſhall, I truſt, eſcape it. I may lament the being driven to ſuch a cruel alternative; but, having once decided, the lot is caſt:—the choice was an eternal one for me; and, were the means in my power by which I could be free this moment, I would refuſe them.

If I had been the miſtreſs of my fate, and could have ordered the future part

of

of my life to my own pleaſure, I ſhould not have chained myſelf to a cloiſter; I ſhould not have been ſo prodigal of happineſs as to have remained in a ſituation wherein my wiſhes and my duty would have ſuch different objects, whoſe continual conflict will deſtroy my repoſe, and end my being.—But I already ſee the end of my courſe, and my wiſhes are, every hour, ſhortening the unpleaſing path that leads to it.—In the mean time, Sir, I entreat you to remove from me the thought of making you wretched: do not ſuffer your complaints to reach the ears of one who cannot relieve them, and whoſe ſympathy with yours will not fail to encreaſe the melancholy cauſe of her own. Do not combine with my own heart in diſturbing the repoſe of

ISABELLA.

LETTER THE EIGHTH.

To ISABELLA.

YOU ſuffer yourſelf, charming Iſabella! to be led away by a chimera which will undo you. It is a crime to be miſerable when we have it in our power to be happy. The vow which weds you to Sorrow is falſe in itſelf, as well as contrary to every law of Nature, to every principle of ſelf-preſervation, and the will of Heaven. To fly from miſery is more than natural,—it is inſtinctive; and to avoid apparent evil is a principle which governs every-thing that has life and ſenſation. Perhaps, there is not in Nature an event ſo much to be dreaded by a mind pure and tender as yours, as to be forced into the arms of a man who is the object of your deteſtation. To turn your back upon

upon ſuch an union, and to fly from ſuch a ſcene of diſtreſs, was the natural reſult of the firſt reflection; but your flight has been incomplete, and you are ſtill unhappy. What, Iſabella, with your reaſon and underſtanding, can you truſt yourſelf to the paw of the Bear, becauſe he has ſaved you from the jaw of the Lion? Do you call this a deliverance? Can you be reſigned to it, and think it a bleſſing?—Impoſſible!

If the real happineſs or honour of thoſe who were dear to you could be preſerved or encreaſed by the ſacrifice of your liberty, you would have ſome motives to aid your reſolution in making you reſigned: but, ſuperior as you are to the prejudices of your country, you mock at the pretended wiſdom of that unſubſtantial, irrational, and, I may add,

add, irreligious pride, which, finding it could not govern the affections of your heart to its own purpoſe, was reſolved to diſappoint them of any other.

If you can find comfort in the walls which encloſe you, I will never ſuggeſt a wiſh to look beyond them.—More, far more than the half of pleaſure is to beſtow it; the object muſt participate the joy, or Love is a brutal inſtinct that ſhould never be named.

You have ſeen ſomething of the world, and I can perceive from your letters, as I have obſerved from your converſation and manners, that you were formed to be the honour, the happineſs, and the pride of ſocial life. Heaven deſigned you to be a model of perfection to your ſex; and will you oppoſe the deſigns of Heaven by ſhutting it from their ſight? Beauty, which

expreſſes

expreſſes itſelf in the features of an angel,—grace, that enhances the form of Virtue,—ſmiles that would charm in heaven,—and words whoſe ſweetneſs no muſic ever equalled, were not given to be hid in the gloom of a Cloiſter. You were not caſt in ſo pure a mould, and ſo highly accompliſhed with every great and rareſt charm, to be covered with that impenetrable veil which hides you from the admiration of mankind. Such a flower was not reared in the fair garden of the world to be tranſplanted into a ſolitude inſenſible of its beauty, and where its fragrance is waſted. It is the intereſt of Heaven to diſplay ſo fair and bright a part of its creation; and it is promoting the ends of Virtue to pluck it from the miſts which becloud it.

That Being, whoſe aid you invoked when you pronounced the vow that ſe-

parated

parated you from the world, looks with pity on the weakneſſes of his creatures, and will not conſider it as an offence againſt him that Miſery ſhould break its bondage. It would be a virtue, an heroic, a patriot virtue, to force the bolts that confine you. Think, Iſabella, that you are anſwerable for all the good you might do in the world; reflect how little you can perform where you are; and the falſe Delicacy which now deceives you will fade away before the convictions of Reaſon. Do you imagine that the walls of your monaſtery cannot be ſcaled?—Oh, lovely Iſabella! ſay that you wiſh to be free, and I will ſecure your freedom, or periſh in the attempt.

LETTER THE NINTH.

The Anſwer.

YOU do not deceive me, but you deceive yourſelf, and feed a flame with hopes that can never be accompliſhed. Amiable Briton! you ſeek an object that can never be yours. Though I cannot be happy, Heaven, in its mercy, may teach me to be reſigned. Could you open the doors of my Cloiſter at this moment, I would turn my back upon the offered freedom. What would the world be to me, could I range throughout it? The idea of being a vagabond upon the earth makes me ſmile for a moment on the narrow limits to which my life is confined. On comparing my ſituation with that of thouſands, who are languiſhing in various

various ſhapes of hopeleſs miſery, my heart tells me that I ought to acknowledge the goodneſs of Providence in having afforded me a ſhelter from them.

That I might have been happier, is a mere matter of conjecture; that I might have been more wretched, I have already confeſſed; and who will dare to ſay that it is not a bleſſing to be thus equally removed from either ſituation? Are not the apprehenſions of diſtant evil frequently diſappointed by ſome unexpected alleviation; and are not the hopes of happineſs equally liable to be deceived by the diſtant appearance of their objects? Thus it is that ſupreme Wiſdom appears to preſerve a balance in its diſpenſations to the human race. Alas! if the ſum of happineſs could be aſcertained at the cloſe of life, there would not be that difference between the

the final accounts of thoſe whom the world determines to be happy and miſerable, as that world may imagine. In the preſent delirium of your paſſion, you are deceived into a belief that its gratification would not be accompanied with the fainteſt gleam of infelicity. Alas! that Reaſon, by whoſe oracles you urge me to be admoniſhed and directed, will tell you far otherwiſe; Religion is ready to confound ſuch a faith; and human Experience, if I have been rightly informed, would be entirely and univerſally againſt you.

I wiſh you very much to conſider, whether, though it may be natural, it is always right, to leave one's wretchedneſs: there are, ſurely, ſituations where to fly from miſery would be a mark of cowardice, and be ſtigmatiſed with

diſ-

diſgrace. What is that principle which men call Honour; which I have heard mentioned as a bond of ſuperior obligation; which will urge your ſex to deeds of extreme hardſhip and equal danger; for which fortune, eaſe, and even life itſelf, are often put to the hazard? Reflect a little upon this queſtion, and then conſider the vows which a Nun takes, as well as the ſolemnity which accompanies them, on her aſſuming a religious life; after this, you will be forced to acknowledge, that it would betray a want of principle, diſgraceful in the higheſt degree, to break ſuch a ſolemn engagement. The compulſion ſometimes uſed by parents on ſuch occaſions may be urged to invalidate its force; and ſo it might, if the parent, whoſe tyranny dragged the victim

victim to the altar, ſhould repent, and had the power of claiming his injured child, and taking her again to his boſom. But this cannot be done: parental authority does not reach this manſion; and if an inhabitant of it ſhould make her eſcape, to what is ſhe to truſt? how is ſhe to live? or where is ſhe to go? When reduced to deſpair, the aſylum ſhe has quitted may receive her again within its gates, but it muſt be, at beſt, to ſuffer a life of torturing penance; while her family and relations will execrate her diſgrace, and aid her puniſhment.

Beſides, where there no other obſtacles to an eſcape, the lofty walls that encloſe us, the maſſive bars that confine us, and the watchful eyes that guard us, are more than ſufficient to damp any

ſpirit of enterpriſe that is not ſuggeſted by madneſs or deſpair *.

Let me again entreat you to call Reaſon to your aid: reſpect my ſituation, I beſeech you, and conſider your own. If the few charms which I may poſſeſs, and which are every hour fading away, have thus ſtrangely faſcinated you, I have another and very unexpected motive to wiſh that Nature had been a niggard to me: I might then have been unobſerved by the monſter who drove me hither, and the mortifications of this place would not have been encreaſed by your fruitleſs ſighs and unavailing endeavours.

Again I exhort you to apply your

* Alas, Iſabella! you are the dupe of your own heart:—it is ſuch an enterpriſe that you now meditate.

own underſtanding and reflection to the ſubject;—do not deceive yourſelf, but open your eyes upon the impoſſibility of ſucceſs. If it depended upon me alone, I could not flatter you with a ſingle gleam of hope; but there are a thouſand inſurmountable obſtacles between your wiſhes and my conſent, even if it were poſſible to obtain it. Indeed, for my own repoſe, as well as t turn your thoughts to the recovery o yours, it is my duty to put an end to this correſpondence; and, while I entreat you to extinguiſh a flame which muſt burn in vain, I ought to give my counſel the energy it deſerves by an aſſurance that this will be the laſt letter you will ever receive from

ISABELLA.

LETTER THE TENTH.

To ISABELLA.

IF you wiſhed to baniſh me for ever from you, in what cruel moment was it that you conſented to admit me once again to your preſence? Was it your deſign to complete your triumph, by rendering my love more intolerable, and haſtening my deſpair?

I never ſaw you in the gay apparel of the world; but, ſurely, no dreſs could give a greater force to your charms than that which it is your lot to wear. The habit of parade and faſhion may add a more dazzling glare to the beauties of feature and complexion; but where perſonal charms are heightened by the graces of character, the ſimple garb in which Religion has clad your heavenly

heavenly form gives to loveliness its full force, and fixes the attention to its best object. The snowy robe, which hangs in ample folds around you, gives a simple, awful, yet winning dignity, which all the luxury of the loom could not afford; and the black, transparent veil, which, while it hides nothing, sets off every thing, and would make an homely countenance interesting, —alas! what is its office when it floats around your countenance!

Isabella, did you think to cure my passion at once, by calling me again to the contemplation of those charms which inspired it?—and do you think them faded? Beauty, such as thine, does not depend on that bloom which the anger of a moment may encrease or destroy, which the austerities of Religion may dissipate, and Sorrow will eat

away. There is a caſt of countenance where the majeſty of Virtue, and the tenderneſs of Pity, are duly blended; where the ſoftneſs of the heart aids the perfect lineaments, and where intellectual Grace preſerves one continual ſtruggle with exterior Beauty. This is that lovelineſs which calls forth the warmeſt affection, purifies it with every feeling of Virtue, and makes it eternal. This is that lovelineſs which only preſents itſelf to the eye as the avenue by which it may take poſſeſſion of the ſoul. Such a lovelineſs is yours; and that tender melancholy, which you welcome as the foe to your charms, gives them that affecting attraction which completes their power.—I can neither deſcribe nor reſiſt them; and your words have confirmed your written declaration: with a tear on either cheek, and in a tone of voice

voice which almoſt deprived me of the power of hearing it, you have told me that thoſe charms will never be mine. For what, then, am I to live? With ſuch an aſſurance, why do I continue a moment upon the earth? Is it not the ſentence of death that is pronounced againſt me?—It is,—nor ſhall it long wait for its accompliſhment.—The voice of my complaint ſhall diſturb you no more;—but while I live I will not ceaſe to adore you.

LETTER THE ELEVENTH.

To the ſame.

IF you could behold, but for a moment, the melancholy ſituation to which your ſilence has reduced me, you would accuſe your heart for not having dictated ſome few lines of pity to me. If you are, at length, determined not to enliven me into hope, it cannot, ſurely, be neceſſary to your happineſs, that your neglect ſhould depreſs me into deſpair. Wherefore muſt I curſe the day when I firſt ſet my foot on theſe ſhores? Why do you force me to execrate the hour that gave me birth, and make it the ſecond wiſh of my heart that my eyes had never beheld the ſun? —Know, Iſabella, and I call every power of Heaven to bear me witneſs, no

no conſideration in Nature, no human tie, no earthly temptation, ſhall divorce me from the ſpot which contains all that is dear to me in the world. I will breathe the ſame air that you breathe, and enjoy the melancholy pleaſure of contemplating your priſon, till the flame which gives me life ſhall conſume me. My native country ſhall receive me no more; the mother that doats on me ſhall no more embrace her ſon. The love of you, all cruel as you are, makes me unnatural without remorſe, and abſorbs every feeling that has hitherto been the claim of Friendſhip and of Duty.—I have no ſenſibilities but for you; my grave will not be far diſtant from yours;—yet a little while, and your barbarity ſhall be glutted with its victim.

Alas!—mine were the faireſt hopes; Fortune ſmiled laviſhly upon me, and a bright

a bright ſcene of proſperity ſurrounded me;—but you have conjured up a cloud which obſcures the goodlieſt proſpect that ever gave ſplendor to early life, and have bribed Fate to blaſt every expectation of happineſs.—Cruel Iſabella! the moſt inexorable Tyrant does not refuſe bread and water to the Criminal whom he has conſigned to the Dungeon!

LETTER THE TWELFTH.

The Anſwer.

WHAT fatal influence governs me that I ſhould write to you again?—and wherefore do I ſuffer your reproaches to reach me? Alas! I deſerve them not:—my heart laments your anguiſh; but it does not accuſe me of giving one pang to your boſom. When you call me cruel, you are yourſelf unjuſt, very unjuſt indeed, to one who never injured you, who ſhares your troubles, and would willingly add to the cruelty of her deſtiny, if that would avail, to calm them for ever.—Ungrateful man! have I uſed any arts to ſeduce you?——Have I not, from the firſt moment you made known your paſſion, urged every motive that might prevail on you to forget

forget the unattainable object of it? Did I build theſe walls? Was I the architect of my eternal priſon? Did my hands forge the bars beyond which I cannot paſs?—Anſwer me from your heart, and ceaſe to accuſe me.

Huſh your paſſions for a moment, and, in the interval of reaſon, let me aſk you, what would you think of a woman who ſhould break the moſt ſolemn vows, riſque her honour, and diſgrace her ſex, (I ſpeak not of life, for that cannot be called a ſacrifice,) to throw herſelf into the arms of a ſtranger, without any ſecurity for her fame or her happineſs but the declaration of a paſſion, which, being kindled in a moment, may, in a moment, be extinguiſhed? You cannot ſuppoſe I mean to accuſe you of baſeneſs or treachery: this letter proves how free my heart is from ſuch ungenerous ſuſ-

picions.

picions. I doubt not of your preſent ſincerity; but I have a right to conſider the ficklenеſs natural to youth. Alas! the many examples of female wretchedneſs, founded on haſty confidence, which even my ſmall information has unfolded to me, will more than juſtify me.

Is there a ſituation ſo horrible, or can Imagination, in its moſt gloomy moments, form any lot ſo worthy of pity, and ſo totally deſperate, as that of a woman in my ſituation, who, having broken her monaſtic vows, ſhould be deſerted by the man who had ſeduced her? Baniſhed from her country, not only by a ſenſe of ſhame, but the dread of puniſhment,—without the means of ſupport in a diſtant land, whoſe language ſhe may not know,—what is left for her but to die in a ſtate of wretchedneſs which makes me ſhudder in the reflection, or

to gain a precarious ſubſiſtence, by a life of abandoned proſtitution, which is worſe than any wretchedneſs, and only delays, to encreaſe, the agonies of deſpair.

The hiſtory of ſuch a dreadful diſaſter is not the dream of fiction: upon the walls of this Cloiſter ſuch a ſtory is recorded. I have read, day after day, the horrid tale, and have as often wept the fate of an unhappy ſiſter of this Convent, who was thus ſeduced, and was thus abandoned; who lived the miſerable life, and died the agonizing death, which I have deſcribed. Whenever this inſcription meets my eyes, I conſider theſe walls as an aſylum, which, though they do not afford me happineſs, will, at leaſt, preſerve me innocent; and, though this Monaſtery may not poſſeſs an opiate for diſcontent, it will ſecure me from deſpair. With ſuch impreſſions as theſe,

and

and under ſuch circumſtances as I now profeſs, the woman who could be won, at ſuch an hazard, to break her ſolemn engagements, would not deſerve to be united to a worthy man, nor be capable of adminiſtering to his happineſs:—nay, when the ardour of paſſion began to ſubſide, a worthy man would ſtartle at her imprudence, and find his affection leſſen under the natural ſuſpicion of her future infidelities. Such a woman would be unchaſte in the contemplation of ſo bold a deſign; ſhe would be abandoned before ſhe ſought the protection of her ſeducer. Leave me then, I beſeech you;—be grateful to that Providence which ſmiles upon you, and turn your heart from an unfortunate object who cannot offer the returns it ſo well deſerves. Beſtow, if you pleaſe, ſome ſhare of your compaſſion upon me; but give your affections

fections to thoſe for whom Heaven deſigned them.

You tell me, Sir, that you have a Mother who doats upon you: return, then, to comfort the fond parent, who muſt languiſh in the abſence of ſuch a ſon as you. Haſte, oh haſte, to gladden her declining years! Give the ſmile of joy to thoſe who long for your return, and to your Country that worth which will be an honour to it. The renewal of ſuch glowing affections as you will experience among thoſe to whom Nature has united you, the ardour of thoſe ſocial regards which renewed Friendſhips will rekindle, and the entrance upon thoſe Duties which your rank muſt claim, will ſoon diſpel the paſſion which now torments you, and leave your heart free for the impreſſion of ſome more worthy object of your own country, of your own religion, and ſpeak-

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ing your own language, with whom you will enjoy the fruits of an honeſt and virtuous paſſion, unmingled with any remorſe, and free from any reproach.—Then, my generous friend, you will remember theſe counſels with regard; and, that youthful, ardent paſſion, which now diſturbs your peace, being extinct, you will reſpect the memory of one who made ſome ſacrifices to ſuppreſs it, and thank me, at every moment of reflection, that I oppoſed thoſe deſires whoſe gratification would have cauſed our mutual undoing.

I have written, in this letter, the language of my heart;—in a diſpaſſionate moment it muſt be the language of yours. I will conſent to receive an anſwer to this, on the condition that it ſhall contain a laſt adieu.—The idea of an eternal farewel from one who has thought ſo

highly of me as you have done, cannot but affect me; and if a ſenſibility I cannot reſiſt forces the waters upon my cheek, be aſſured that Reaſon will mingle the tears of ſatisfaction with them.

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LETTER THE THIRTEENTH.

To ISABELLA.

IF a word of reproach ſtole into any letter which I have addreſſed to you, I acknowledge its injuſtice, and muſt ſearch for an excuſe in ſome moment of diſtraction, when the weakneſs of my hopes hurried me into an intemperate arraignment of your heart. It deſerves an higher praiſe than I have the power to beſtow, and to gain admittance into it is the object of all my wiſhes. If I am not found worthy to be received into that temple of all good, let not the Divinity, who poſſeſſes it, exclude me from the ſad privilege of paſſing the reſt of my devoted life before its gates. When I have expired there, every ſorrow will be at an end;

but to turn from it would be a living death of cruel reflection and bitter diſappointment. Alas! I have no right to conceive, much leſs to write, an accuſation againſt you. If I could dare to accuſe Providence, I ſhould ſay it was unjuſt in ſuffering one of its creatures, on whom it had been ſo laviſh, to be hidden from the eye of the world; and that to plant ſuch a flower in a deſert, would be to juſtify the avarice which makes treaſure of no uſe. But the ways of Heaven, however myſterious, ſhould be reſpected by weak mortals, and the ſevereſt ſtorms of life demand ſubmiſſion inſtead of reproach. Submiſſion is a neceſſary duty, and reproach is the worſt of crimes: hardened Villainy and outrageous Deſpair are alone capable of committing it.

To be deprived of that which can alone

alone make life valuable, is a circumſtance of real miſery: to have the only hope blaſted on which happineſs depends, is the ſummit of misfortune. Such a ſituation will be mine, if I do not poſſeſs you; but it ſhall not make me blaſpheme againſt Heaven or you. I cannot command either my feelings or my fate; but I can offer the one as a ſilent ſacrifice to you, and ſubmit with patience, a reluctant patience I fear it muſt be, to the other.

You command me to return to my native country;——yes, Iſabella commands, and I cannot obey her. Alas! you muſt accompany me thither, or I ſhall never ſee it more. My mind is ſo deeply impreſſed with your image, that it is not ſuſceptible of any other. I am not a ſlave to the deluſions of love, but to love itſelf; that ennobling

and tender ſentiment, which gives to the ſoul a proper ſenſibility of its own nature, which awakens the fineſt and moſt exalted feelings, that raiſes humanity to ſomething more than human, and is only a better name for the moſt exalted virtue.

Do not be ſurpriſed nor angry when you are informed that I have put an end to a connection which has been nurſed with care by thoſe who governed my education; a connection which began with my infancy, and was deſigned, at a future period, to have been ſanctified at the altar. The object is amiable, but ſhe is not Iſabella:—I loved her with a brother's affection, but not with a lover's rapture; and, if my heart had remained my own, I might have been united to her. I have written to my family on this ſubject. I have told them,

them, that, in a matter of ſo much real conſequence to myſelf, I muſt make my own choice, and be my own maſter; and that they muſt not expect the playful fondneſs of boyiſh age to riſe in mature life to that ſerious paſſion which can alone promiſe a ſolid happineſs to the nuptial union. I have, in ſhort, put an end to their expectations of that nature for ever.—In this buſineſs, however, I have not been unfaithful, for I never promiſed fidelity; I have not been inconſtant, for I never vowed conſtancy. Indeed, I was a total ſtranger to the paſſion of Love, till I beheld you; but the moment my eyes met yours, it ſtruck me like the lightning of heaven, and I was bleſſed or undone for ever. In an inſtant it ſeized every part of me, it ran through every vein, and changed me into a new being;—my nature was no

more the ſame, my ſentiments wore a different colour, and ſuch a ſtrange, unknown, and powerful ſenſibility poſſeſſed me, that I began to think that my features would partake of the tranſformation.—I now thought no more of my native country; the Mother that bore me was forgotten; and all thoſe ties with which Nature and habit bind the heart ſeemed at once to be broken. —The world is nothing to me; the ſpot which contains you ſeems to be the whole of the univerſe: in ſhort, my heart is ſolely and immoveably attached to you.

What are all the beauties of Nature to him who is blind and cannot behold them? The verdant hill, the cryſtal fountain, the painted meadow, and the towering city, afford no delight to that eye which is beclouded in darkneſs.—

What

What are the ſweeteſt ſounds to that ear whoſe organs cannot receive them? The moſt dulcet muſic, and the perſuaſion of celeſtial eloquence, will not affect him who is deaf and cannot hear. —What are the ſenſibilities to virtue, the power of excellence, the tenderneſs of pity, and the rapture of doing good, to the heart which is hardened by ſome deadly paſſion?—Let me add, what are the ſmiles of Fortune to him who is only anxious for yours; and what attraction can the world have for him but in the ſpot which you inhabit?—Believe me, charming Iſabella! though the moſt ſplendid palace, with all its honours and all its pleaſures, invited me to poſſeſs it, I would turn my back upon the offer with diſdain, to become the maſter of a cottage, from whence I could behold the turrets of your priſon.

It would be no ſmall comfort to ſay There ſhe dwells! and to behold the temple which contains the idol of my heart, though I could not be admitted into it. The pleaſure of opening my lattice, to behold the morning ſun gild the ſpires of your convent, would be far greater than the proudeſt ſpectacle of the world could afford me; and, at the evening hour, to breathe my ſighs beneath the walls that encloſe you, would be a luxury that wealth could not purchaſe.—It is a melancholy idea, but I ſhould never part with it, that the ſun, when it ſhone upon your grave, might, at the ſame moment, glimmer upon mine.

You tell me to chaſe away Paſſion, and you command me to conſult Reaſon.—If by Paſſion you mean my love of you, there is but one way of doing it, which is to end my being, or, at leaſt, to deſtroy

that

that ſenſation which gives to exiſtence its only value. If by Reaſon you mean any power of reflection abſtracted from you, it is impoſſible; your image is ſo faſtened to my heart, that my very life-ſtrings muſt break ere it can eſcape me. You would have me endeavour to convince myſelf that I ought not to love you; alas! every feeling I poſſeſs is ſo deeply engaged to ſupport an oppoſing ſentiment, that it would be a fruitleſs, as well as a painful attempt. Reaſon would turn aſide from ſuch an employment, to aſk you, whether thoſe engagements which ſnatch you from the duties of life can be ſacred; and if a ſituation which is contrary to your nature, and muſt produce repining and diſcontent, can be approved by Heaven? If your limbs were bound, and the tyrant who cauſed the cruelty ſhould tell you that they were not

made

made for motion, would you not ſcoff at the falſehood, and think it a duty to break aſunder the cords that confined you? Is not your preſent impriſonment, which excludes you from the utilities and functions, the pleaſures and honour of life; which is the offspring of abominable policy and gloomly ſuperſtition;—Is not, I ſay, ſuch an impriſonment equally injurious and deteſtable, as ſhameful to ſupport as it would be righteous to eſcape?

As for your family and friends, you are already eſtranged from them. They have driven you from their affections and remembrance. You are now as dead to them as if you were in your grave. If I err not, the principle of a conventual ſtate is founded in an entire ſeparation from all earthly connections, and that all the tender realities of life are

to

to be abſorbed in the new alliance which is ſuppoſed to be made with Heaven. If ſuch an allotment can ſo fill the mind as to produce contentment, nothing more can be ſaid; the exchange is fortunate, and the anticipation of another and better world is a wondrous ſource of ſatisfaction on earth. But if you ſhould find, lovely Iſabella! that theſe celeſtial eſpouſals are but the dreams of Enthuſiaſm; if your enlightened underſtanding ſhould pierce the clouds of Superſtition, and diſcover the fallacy of ſuch a notion; if your heart ſhould revolt at the blaſphemy of ſuch an idea, what remains for you?— To return to that home which was once your own, would be a perilous and vain attempt; its doors muſt be ſhut againſt you, while its inhabitants, inſtead of affording you protection, would, in the furious zeal of miſtaken piety, ſeize you

as

as a criminal, and bear you back, laden with diſgrace, and trembling with the fears of puniſhment, to the Cloiſter which you had deſerted. What then remains for you, but to ſuffer your bondage with patience, and to let your eyes look upon one unvarying, diſmal proſpect, through the reſt of your days, or turn at once from it to where an honourable marriage, a moſt ardent affection, a ſplendid fortune, and all the pleaſing, tender relations of life, unfold themſelves to you. Theſe objects are not ideal; Fancy has not made them gay with its deluſive colours: the whole exiſts; and I wait but your permiſſion to conduct you to it. Love will find wings to top your lofty walls; it poſſeſſes ſtrength to break your bars in twain, and cunning to lull the ſleepleſs dragon that watches you. Iſabella! you are on the confines of another king-

kingdom; in a few hours you would be ſafe from immediate danger; in a few days you may ſet all danger at defiance; and, in a few weeks, oh happy, bliſsful thought! you may be ſecure in a land of freedom, where we may be united for ever.

That I am a ſtranger to you is moſt true, and, being ſo, I cannot wonder at your apprehenſions; but this is my only crime: conſcious, however, of my integrity, and knowing what I am, your diſtruſt mortifies and diſtracts me. Do not only turn your eyes, but your thoughts alſo, from that deluſive and alarming tale, which pious Fraud has inſcribed upon your walls, to make you contented with your chains, and to conſider him as an enemy who would aid you to break them.—Alas! muſt ſuch arts be practiſed upon you? And is it thus that Reaſon

ſon is to be quenched? Is it thus that the happineſs of rational beings is to be perverted?—Iſabella cannot be the dupe of ſuch unworthy deceptions.

I do not wiſh you to wound, in the ſmalleſt degree, the delicacy of your own mind: I can live long upon hope, when ſupreme happineſs is its object. Try my fidelity;—let length of time, if no other means will ſatisfy you, ſerve to wear away your apprehenſions, and beget your confidence: let your fancy be ingenious to find out new modes of proving me; and I beſeech you not to be ſatisfied while the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion of my truth may remain.—There is but one command which will not inſure obedience—Oh, Iſabella!—if you tell me not to love, I cannot obey you.

LETTER THE FOURTEENTH.

To Mr. CROLI.

WITHOUT entering into a particular explanation, which at preſent is not in my power, I muſt inſiſt on your immediate departure from this place. Do not ſtay even to write an adieu, but begone. It is neceſſary for us both that you ſhould not make the leaſt delay; and when you are arrived at ſome diſtant deſtination, let me hear from you. The ſame faithful meſſenger will continue to forward our communications. If the ſentiments of your laſt letter are ſincere, you will not heſitate a moment to obey me.—Adieu!—Do not think me cruel!—Theſe few lines ſhould be the moſt flattering you ever received from

ISABELLA.

LETTER THE FIFTEENTH.

To ISABELLA.

Naples, ——.

I HAVE obeyed your commands, and I truſt that you are ſatisfied. For ſome days I have been flying from happineſs, and am now at a torturing diſtance from you. As I promiſed ſubmiſſion, however diſappointed in the means which you have taken to prove my ſincerity, I cannot complain.—But if you have ordained that I am to ſee you no more, the meaſure of my griefs will ſoon be completed.

I have read again and again the paper which was the unexpected warrant of my exile; a thouſand times has my curious attention endeavoured to diſcover, but in vain, the tenderneſs which, you tell me, lurks within it. Is it a

ſign

ſign of your favour, Iſabella, to baniſh me from you, and at once to diſſipate the few rays of comfort which are left me; or, rather, to deprive my fainting ſpirits of what ſuſtained them in life, if my preſent exiſtence can deſerve that name? I was near you, and ſometimes ſaw and converſed with you: this was a privilege, the loſs whereof cannot find a poſſible compenſation at the diſtance to which your commands have driven me. The roof that covered you was a pleaſing object to me: I could ſee the trees which towered above your garden walls, beneath whoſe ſhade you ſometimes repoſe; and to be awakened from my feveriſh ſlumbers by the ſame bell which ſummoned you to your early duties, was a conſolation which I poſſeſs no more. Theſe were circumſtances of no ſmall importance to one who loves

like me. Happineſs does not leave its habitation in the human heart while it has a ſingle point whereon to reſt. Though it enjoys but ſmall repoſe, though it never knows the uninterrupted interval, ſtill it yields, with reluctance, the little it poſſeſſes, and when it is driven from the ſanctuary it will cleave to the threſhold. It ſtrives to attain the whole: this is its aim and ambition; and, though all its endeavours may prove unavailing in this world, it cannot be driven but by the ſevereſt ſtroke of Fate to quit an habitation which it ſeems to have been originally deſigned to occupy.

I have now taken my abode in the moſt beautiful city of the univerſe, and I preferred it as the place of my preſent exile from the recollection of thoſe pleaſures it had already afforded me.—

But

But, alas! my mind is ſo changed from what it was when I was here before, that the objects of its former amuſement and ſatisfaction produce nought but wearineſs and diſguſt.—I was then —but let that paſs and be forgotten— ſuch a deſcription would have the appearance of diſcontent, and, with all my apprehenſions, with all the violent agitations of my ſpirits, I am not diſcontented; for I do moſt ſolemnly declare, that, though I am at this time the moſt wretched of human beings, I would not change my lot with the happieſt, if I was to be deprived of loving you.—Every-thing that is magnificent and charming in Art and Nature adorn this lovely ſpot; I know it, but I do not feel it, and ſpeak only from the faint remembrance of the admiration which it received from me before I had

ſeen you: my eyes ſeem, at this time, to poſſeſs their wondrous faculties but to gaze on you; my tongue faulters under any other exertion but to ſpeak your praiſe; my mind is the ſlave of your charms; and my heart pants but for you. If my dejected ſpirits were capable of being deluded from their woe, this place not only poſſeſſes but offers every means to aid the friendly deception;—but, amidſt them all, I remain the ſame, and the only object which can engage my attention is the angry Volcano, that is now caſting forth its burning entrails, and ſpreads terror and deſolation around it. What, can nothing but ſights of horror attract my notice, or is it that I alſo bear a conſuming flame within me, and look towards the labouring mountain as an emblem of myſelf?

The

The further I fly from you, the more I ſeem to love you; and, like the bird that is limed, in ſtruggling to be free, I encreaſe my bondage. If you thought that baniſhment would change the ſentiments of my heart, your doubts have deceived you:—I acknowledge your right to make an experiment, vain in itſelf, and painful to me, and I have ſubmitted to it.—Alas! does the exile forget his native country? Though it were placed amid frozen ſeas, or beneath burning ſuns, he looks towards it with a faithful and longing regard, and would gladly leave the faireſt elyſiums of the earth to return thither.—If you ſent me away to loſe my importunities, great and inconſiderate was your cruelty; for you might have ſaved me the pain of a feveriſh journey by commanding me into ſilence: I would have obeyed you,

though I had ſealed my obedience with my death.—If you wiſhed, by your laſt injunction, to try the extent of your authority over me, I have ſatisfied you, and expect my reward.

Happineſs and Miſery are only known by compariſon. The bitter anxiety I ſuffered when I lived beſide your gates was light as air, when put in the balance againſt the weight of my preſent ſolicitude, now I am at ſuch a diſtance from you.—Oh, Iſabella! 'tis a mournful abſence, and a cruel ſeparation!—— The firſt moments of my departure were hardly to be borne!—My eyes were continually towards your Convent; my heart directed its ſighs there; and my ſoul ſtrove, with all its power, to fly thither.—If I muſt abandon you, the world will become odious to me: in removing from you, I remove from life; and,

and, in returning to my country, I haſten to my tomb.

At this moment, I am utterly incapable of expreſſing the ſmalleſt part of thoſe emotions which agitate, which torment me without ceaſing, and, as it were, animate my miſery.—The loſs of my life or my reaſon, will, I fear, be alone able to repreſent to you the mournful diſquietude of my mind, and the pitiable ſtate of my heart.—My ſorrow weighs me down, diffuſes a torpor over my ſenſes, and becomes a kind of partial opiate, which makes me inſenſible to every-thing but itſelf.—Indeed, indeed, Iſabella, life is a burthen to me; —my heart is oppreſſed beyond deſcription, and nothing will or can relieve it but your tender conſolations.—If you ſhould now neglect me; if you ſhould have ſent me into exile, that I might

might not die in your preſence, your wiſh ſhall be accompliſhed; but I ſwear, by the fatal paſſion which poſſeſſes me, that I will convey to you the laſt ſhriek of my deſpair.

LETTER THE SIXTEENTH.

The Anſwer.

I HAVE already told you, and I am more than ſorry that you oblige me to repeat my complaints, of your injuſtice. You are ſtudious to torment yourſelf; and, in the reſtleſſneſs of your own griefs, you lift up your voice againſt me. Whatever might be my motives to deſire your abſence, it becomes you to ſuppoſe them juſt, both towards yourſelf and me. The time may not be diſtant when you will be made acquainted with them; but you muſt wait with patience for a diſcloſure, which, whenever it happens, will afford you ſome ſatisfaction.

Why cannot you write to me as a friend? Wherefore are your letters

filled

filled with deſcriptions of your own miſery, with accuſations of my cruelty, and the menaces of your own deſpair? Can you be ſo miſtaken in me, as to ſuppoſe that ſuch a method of writing will render them pleaſant and acceptable to me? Alas! it will make me wiſh never to receive them. You have every reaſon to be ſatisfied with me: I have already gone very far, perhaps too far, in forming this correſpondence with you; and in aſſuming the power to command you, I have gone ſtill farther. —I aſk you, and let the queſtion reach your heart, for what end could I propoſe a plan for your conduct, if I were not intereſted in your happineſs?— When I reflect on the manner I have acted towards you, the language of your laſt letter fills me with aſtoniſhment: if I know myſelf, I deſerved returns

turns of reſpect and gratitude, rather than thoſe of menace and reproach.

Let me entreat you to give ſomewhat of regularity to your ſentiments. The ſincerity of affection is not proved by wild and incoherent declamation. Pure and ſolid love is ever accompanied with reaſon; and, though its language may glow with more than common animation, though, to common obſervers, it may appear ſometimes to ſtray from its aſſociate, it never quits, in reality, that ſober guidance which can alone preſerve it from folly and intemperance. If you imagine that the affections of a reaſonable woman are to be gained by an unmanly ſenſibility, you are ſhamefully miſtaken. We may weep over the ſorrows of thoſe whom we deſpiſe, but ſomething more than extorted compaſſion is neceſſary to prepare the heart for

for the impreſſions of a tender paſſion. There are no qualities which women ſo much admire in the other ſex as courage and reſolution; even the romantic exceſſes of them ſeldom fail to receive their eſteem and approbation. The education, the frame, and duties of women, naturally lead them to conſider men as their guardians: to them they look for protection; and the manly virtues, which I have already named, qualify them to anſwer ſuch proper expectations. When, therefore, they are deficient in ſuch an eſſential and honourable part of their character, the weakneſs even of women will know how to deſpiſe them.

In the language of your laſt letter, you may reply, that, in all the horrid catalogue of dangers, there is not one which you would not encounter for my ſake;

ſake; nay, that you would not only riſque but ſacrifice your life to preſerve mine, or make it happy. I am too well diſpoſed to believe you; but true courage is ſomething more than this. Cowards have been known to fight; Paſſion will have its fits of raſhneſs; the trembling Miſer will defend his treaſure, as the weakeſt animal will, in deſpair, combat with the ſtrongeſt. But ſuch temporary exertions of Courage do not anſwer to my ideas of a brave and manly character. He muſt be diſpoſed, in every act of his life, to manifeſt a becoming reſolution; and he who paſſes his days in the peaceful boſom of retirement, may find equal occaſion to exert it, with him whoſe lot is caſt in the activity of camps and the turmoil of war. There is a certain dignity of character which the brave man will never

never loſe, whether he reſiſts the terrors of the tented field, or the temptations of luxurious life; whether he fights with the armed enemy, or with himſelf, the moſt dangerous of all enemies. In vain will the warrior turn the attention of a wiſe man to the acclamations of his ſoldiers, if he diſgraces his public triumphs by ſinking beneath private misfortunes. The bravery of battle is often mechanical; the fear of diſgrace, the apprehenſion of puniſhment, the ſpirit of emulation, even the power of ſympathy, may make a man brave for the occaſion. But the true principle of Courage ſupports the character whom it inſpires, at all times and on all occaſions. The mind of that man is above fear, and it is not in the power of human events to make him ſhrink from his purpoſe.

Inſen-

Inſenſibility is a very different quality. The brave man feels, but it is not in a manner unworthy of him. He is capable not only of every great but every tender ſentiment. He can love with a real ardour, but which never betrays him into weakneſs or folly. He calls forth the admiration of her who inſpired his paſſion, and enſures her regard by the dignity of it. When his boſom heaves with the pangs of doubt and ſuſpence, he exhibits an example of that noble ſuffering which it is the honour and privilege of Beauty to relieve. He does not win his way to the heart by thoſe deluſions to which ſo many weak, unhappy women owe their ruin, but by that affecting demeanour, thoſe kind attentions, generous and manly confidence, which ſecure the moſt exalted ſentiments of female nature to plead his cauſe.

This is the character which I would hold up for your imitation: embrace it, I beſeech you, and ceaſe to diſgrace yourſelf by complaint and tears. How often have you threatened to put an end to your life in my preſence? In what affecting language do you call my attention to the grave, where your agitated frame is to ſleep in peace, and to find a refuge from my cruelties?—Gracious Heaven!—and is it poſſible you can think me cruel!——

That ſuch ideas as theſe do not affect me, I have not declared;—they really go much farther, they terrify and alarm me;—they diſtract that tenderneſs you wiſh to inſpire, and diſturb that ſympathiſing pity which a ſincere paſſion will not fail, in ſome degree, to awaken in a feeling boſom. I know, my friend, as well as you, what Deſpair can meditate;

but

but it is unworthy of you, and hitherto you have no reaſon to deſpair.

To excite compaſſion is conſidered as a general and eaſy method to gain the female heart; and it may ſometimes effect the purpoſe in the ordinary and uninterrupted intercourſe of life. But it muſt be ſomething more than pity;—the nobleſt and moſt exalted ſentiments can alone urge a woman to riſque what ſuch a priſoner as I am muſt hazard to obtain my freedom. Do you think that I ſhould contrive an eſcape from theſe walls for no other purpoſe but to huſh a ſigh, or wipe away a tear? No, my friend, you muſt firſt teach me to eſteem, to admire, to worſhip you; and to form and partake the happineſs of the being one adores, would make every hazard contemptible, and juſtify the utmoſt effort of human reſolution.

Read this letter with attention; yield to its ſuggeſtions; rouze yourſelf from that heavineſs of ſoul which at once diſtreſſes and diſhonours you. Love, pure, generous, diſintereſted love, elevates the human character. Convince me that you glow with ſuch a paſſion by thoſe proofs which may deſtroy every ſuſpicion. If I did not think you capable of it, this letter would never have been written.—I do not wiſh to deal in vaunting language; but theſe ſentiments do not diſgrace me: and, if you are at all ſkilled in the human heart, I need not tell you, that ſhe who poſſeſſes them will not be checked, by any obſtacle on earth, from endeavouring, at leaſt, to become the bleſſing of ſuperior virtue. Adieu!

LETTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

To ISABELLA.

IF I left you in deſpair, where is the wonder that I ſhould write the language of it? You have now enlivened me with hope, and I am hurried into the extreme of joy. Complaint was become natural to me :—but I am unuſed to acknowledgment; and if my gratitude has delayed its offerings, be aſſured, that, in ſpite of my hourly endeavours, I was not ſooner capable of preſenting them in that form which might render them acceptable. I felt ſo much on the celeſtial goodneſs of your laſt letter, and found my expreſſions ſo inadequate to my feelings, that I was obliged to let the delirium of my happineſs, in ſome degree, ſubſide, before I could write to you as I

ought. Ever-lovely Iſabella! I will obey your commands without a murmur; I will liſten to your inſtructions; you ſhall form me to your will; and if a pilgrimage to Mecca would do you good, I would undertake it with rapture.

I now find my love for you ſolemnized by an awfulneſs of character which it did not poſſeſs before. I, alas! had conceived it to be perfect, but I now feel that it wanted its preſent accompaniments to give it perfection. It cannot be more ardent or ſincere, but I am, I know not how, more ſatisfied with it. You have made your ſuperiority beam forth with an higher luſtre, by fortifying my deſpondent mind with the inſtructions of Wiſdom, and communicating the rays of Hope to diſpel the clouds that had ſurrounded me. I begin to diſcern a poſſibility of happineſs, which has enlivened

me

me into a capacity for ſome of the enjoyments of life. My heart does not now ſicken at the thoughts of ſociety, and I have ventured upon the ſerene participation of ſocial ſatisfaction: nay, I now attend to the thunders of the neighbouring mountain, and behold its flaming eruptions with ſome degree of apprehenſion; but, before I heard from you, I had formed, again and again, the deſperate wiſh that its burning ſtreams might overtake and conſume me. But my hopes now tell me that there is ſomething which may make life deſirable.

I only waited to hear from you to make a voyage to ſome of the iſlands of the Mediterranean. Such a deſign, I muſt own, was formed with the wiſh that I might never return; and now, without any real cauſe for apprehenſion, I tremble at the hazard of it.—What a ſtrange

compound is this frail being of ours! the ſport of every paſſion, the ſlave of every opinion; governed not only by the events of life, but ſubject to the air we breathe, and the climate beneath which we live: ſometimes elevated, as it were, above our nature, and ſometimes depreſſed into an imbecillity which is as far beneath it: now inflamed with rage, and now trembling with fear: alternately the object of praiſe and condemnation, of envy and of pity, of admiration and contempt. In this fever of life, I feel an equal danger from the burning as from the chilling fits; and, if you do not apply the effectual balm to my heart, which you alone poſſeſs, my frame will, at length, ſink beneath the conflict, and you will loſe the bleſſed privilege of making him who loves you happy.

That

That I may never ſee you again is a moſt bitter reflection; and when I turn mine eyes from the paper, and look upon the veſſel that waits to bear me ſtill farther from you, I heave a ſigh that would burſt any boſom but mine.---But ſince I am baniſhed from your preſence, it matters little where I go: your image will accompany me in the blooming vale or in the ſandy deſert; on the mountain's height, or on the boſom of the wave. It will not leave me for a moment, and I ſhall, at leaſt, have the conſolation that it will attend me till I poſſeſs the reality, or till I am no more.---I ſhall be returned before I can receive an anſwer from you. The gale is favourable; the canvas is unfurled; and the moment I have written this adieu, we ſhall ſet ſail and be gone. —Why ſhould the tears ſtart from mine eyes as I approach the laſt line? Why

ſhould

ſhould my heart ſink and grow cold in my breaſt with the apprehenſion that it may be an adieu for ever?

LETTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

To Mr. CROLI.

I More than wiſh that this leter may find you arrived in a ſtate of much impatience, and diſpoſed to reproach me. My heart ſympathiſes with you; and the groundleſs but cruel fears which chill your boſom have the ſame effect upon mine, and will continue to agitate it till you announce your ſafe return. The ſea is a faithleſs element, and danger never

never ceaſes to attend the voyager who truſts it. Every wind that has rattled round our turrets, or whiſtled through theſe cloiſters, has made me tremble for you. Shut out from almoſt every object of Nature but the ſky, I watch the floating clouds, and, when they collect themſelves into a tempeſt, I think of you, and yield to thoſe melancholy forebodings, which, in ſpite of every effort of my reaſon, ſo cruelly torment me. When the day is ſerene, I feel ſome pleaſure in the hopes that you may partake of its ſerenity; but when the tempeſt rages, my hoſtile imagination ſuppoſes it to be haſtening to your deſtruction, or already to have deſtroyed you. Reaſon, or, at leaſt, a reaſon ſo changed as mine, cannot combat theſe empty deluſions; and, as if there was not enough of reality to make me miſerable, theſe ſhadowy

fancies

fancies aid the melancholy force of my diſtreſs.

I am now convinced of your fidelity: the truth of your paſſion is not better known to your own breaſt than it is to mine; and my heart reproaches me every moment for having put it to thoſe trials which may be fatal to us both. The hopes with which my laſt letter muſt have inſpired you, ſhould have averted a project ſo pregnant with uneaſineſs: you take a reſolution in deſpair, and put it in practice at the moment when that deſpair is baniſhed. If my fancy, buſy as it is in torturing me, could have ſuppoſed ſo ſtrange a flight, I ſhould have taken every poſſible precaution to prevent it. Was not your love of horror ſufficiently glutted with the terrors of Veſuvius, that you muſt paſs the ſea to viſit the ravages of Ætna? If you contrived

trived this idle expedition to alarm my growing affections, and encreaſe their rapidity, why ſhould you fulfil the miſerable purpoſe, when you muſt perceive that they were haſtening, alas! too faſt, to meet your wiſhes? The very apprehenſions that troubled you at your departure were warnings that you ſhould not go, and ſhould have been obeyed.

You tell me of your impatience for the period of your return: alas! when once you have conſigned yourſelf to the ſea, all power is taken from you. You are the ſlave of the diſcordant elements which reign there, and you muſt yield to their capricious direction. They may turn you from your courſe, and the impatient veſſel which contains you will be driven at their pleaſure. It may be forced upon ſome barbarous coaſt, or thrown upon the ſhattering rock:

—juſt

—juſt Heaven, avert my fears!—unable to reſiſt the furious billows, it may be overwhelmed by them, and your laſt faint appeal to me be oppoſed by the angry wave.

So impatient am I to hear from you, that I had not thrice read your letter, when I haſtened to anſwer it, at a time alſo, and with a want of precaution, which might undo me. But I cannot reſiſt the impulſe of my heart, which will not ceaſe to ſuffer a fluctuating miſery till your own hand has informed me of your ſafety.

LETTER THE NINETEENTH.

To the ſame.

I HAVE waited ſeveral days beyond the time I might have expected to hear from you, with a moſt cruel impatience; and I truſt, that, before this reaches Naples, ſome tidings of your ſafe arrival there will put an end to it.

I now accuſe myſelf with all the bitterneſs of reproach, for having driven you ſo far away. I feel it as an act of injuſtice, and vengeance has overtaken me. The pains which you have deſcribed with ſo much energy reign in my breaſt. Other fears have, of late, alarmed me; but they are paſſed. A very particular attention of late from the Reverend Mother awakened ſuſpicions that our correſpondence was diſcovered,

covered, and that the letter which I have ſo anxiouſly expected was fallen into her hands. That trouble, thank Heaven! is over; a trouble which aroſe from my own trembling conſcience. So far from being the object of any unfavourable conjectures, I am appointed, by her preference, to an office of great confidence in the Convent; which I willingly accepted, for reaſons which ſhe does not ſuſpect, and you will approve.—Alas! how are thoſe around me deceived! My conduct is the admiration of the old, and the example of the young; while I pity the ignorance of them all, and inwardly glory in the hypocriſy which deceives them. It is true, I am devout; but the object of my devotion is far, far different from theirs. I am an idolater as well as they; but my heart worſhips another idol.

idol. When their hymns aſcend the ſkies, mine ſoars not above the earth: their prayers are for an heavenly recompence; mine only aſpire to mortal happineſs. When it is my office to make the organ aid the vocal choir, unſeen I chant a leſs holy ſong; and when celeſtial favour is ſuppoſed to give my fingers their cunning, a being of this world is in my heart, and inſpires me.

Sometimes I envy my ſiſterhood their happy ignorance, and wiſh that my boſom poſſeſſed it. The buſy world is nothing to them; they know none of its cares and troubles, are not perplexed by its doubts and uncertainties, nor will ever be racked by its diſappointments. They have already gained the harbour of peace, without being buffeted by thoſe billows by which the inhabitants of the world muſt be toſſed before they

can attain it. Why was inſtruction given to enlighten my mind, and open the avenues of ſorrow?—While my happy ſiſters look upon the walls which ſurround them as barriers placed by the kindneſs of Heaven againſt the dangers and deluſions of a wicked world; my eyes would pierce them, and my heart execrates every obſtacle which bars the ſight of you—they would fain throw their anxious glances to the ſea whereon late you ſailed; where, perhaps, you may, at this time, be guiding your impatient veſſel; where, alas! you may be ſtemming the menace of an outrageous tide; where, oh heavens! you may be for ever at reſt in its tumultuous bed, but freed from all the troubles of a tumultuous life. Every hour brings theſe ſad preſages with it; haſte then to baniſh them for ever.

LETTER THE TWENTIETH.

To the ſame.

I WRITE to you again in the deepeſt affliction; and if this letter produces no happy aſſurance of you, I ſhall conclude the worſt, and write no more. My two laſt being unanſwered convinces me that ſome terrible misfortune has befallen you. The moment I read of your departure from Naples, my heart foreboded what muſt have ſince happened. Twice the time allotted for your cruel voyage is elapſed, and I have no notice of your return. The fears of every day trouble me with the moſt alarming preſages; and the viſions of the night continually give you to my fancy, in all the horrors of diſtreſs, danger, and death. Fate

has been a moſt cruel foe to my happineſs, and ſeems reſolved to rob me of every one I loved. The kindeſt parents juſt lived to ſee me ſenſible of their tenderneſs. A brother, who might have ſupplied their place, was buried in the ocean, where you may lie: my protecting friends ſunk rapidly from me into their graves; and, at this moment, you may be no more! After all, and ſhould the worſt have happened, there is one comfort left for me,—I ſhall not long ſurvive you.

LETTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

To ISABELLA.

Marſeilles, ——.

ISABELLA, I have eſcaped from ſlavery ſtill to be a ſlave! The irons with which my barbarian maſters fettered me, are ſhook off; but I have not found freedom. A bondage more laſting than that from which I have been delivered, ſtill holds me faſt; and ſhe alone, who has enſlaved my heart, can give me perfect liberty. Perhaps the dangers I have paſſed, and the miſery I have ſuffered, ſince ſhe heard of me, will ſoften her obduracy, and haſten the moment of my happineſs.—Alas! what am I writing?—She may have thought me ungrateful, and may think of me no more.

Not many days after we had left Naples, and when we were already in ſight of Sicily, a Barbary corſair purſued our ſhip, which was, unfortunately for us, a Spaniard,—attacked it, and, after a manly reſiſtance on our part, we were forced to ſubmit; a reſiſtance which coſt us dear, as it heightened the cruelty which thoſe monſters, for I ſhall not call them men, who proved our conquerors, exerciſed over us. My friends, myſelf, and all the crew, were loaded with chains, and thrown without diſtinction into the bottom of the veſſel, where we were ſo cloſely confined, breathed ſuch putrid air, and were fed with ſuch ſcanty and miſerable proviſions, that ſeveral of my unhappy fellow-priſoners died, and nothing could have preſerved me from the ſame wretched fate but the remembrance

and hopes of you. Love darted its vivifying rays into my dark and diſmal abode; your form was never abſent from me; and, in the temporary deliriums of deſpair which ſometimes ſeized me, my rage, as I have ſince been told, did not hinder me from pronouncing your name with a melting exceſs of tenderneſs. On the fourth day,—for we had been frequently becalmed ſince our capture,—our ſtern maſters, finding that death made ſuch an havock among their prey, ſuffered us, from time to time, to breathe the freſh air, and to ſee the light of the ſun. The weather, however, becoming favourable, we ſoon arrived at Algiers, and were immediately thrown into a dungeon, where Hope entirely forſook me, and I expected, nay wiſhed, every moment to pour forth my laſt ſigh to you. I did not, however, re-

main long in this miſerable ſituation: by the active zeal of the Britiſh Conſul, my liberty was ſoon reſtored to me, and my deſpairing boſom yielded to the delicious hopes of ſeeing you once again. I ſeized the opportunity of a ſhip that was ſetting ſail for Marſeilles, to quit the barbarous ſhore: after a ſhort voyage I am ſafe arrived, but ſo feeble and emaciated, that your penetrating eye would not be able to diſtinguiſh the features you knew ſo well. It was my determined purpoſe to return inſtantly to you; but the weak ſtate in which I found myſelf, and the remonſtrances of my phyſician, who aſſured me I ſhould not ſurvive ſuch a journey, even if I ſhould be able to complete it, has arreſted my deſign. Nothing but the apprehenſions of certain death, my Iſabella! could have hindered me from

haſten-

haſtening to preſent myſelf at your grate. I muſt content myſelf, therefore, at this moment, with writing to you; and though I already find myſelf better, it belonged only to ſuch a paſſion as mine, which gives a temporary ſtrength to nature, and makes it capable of efforts beyond its ordinary powers, to inſpire me with force to write this imperfect letter. May I truſt that it will meet with a tender reception from you? that you will pity my diſtreſſes, and give me the bleſſed aſſurance that you will ſoon relieve them? In vain ſhall I have eſcaped the dangers of the ſea; in vain ſhall I have ſurvived the cruelty of barbarians; in vain will favouring Heaven reſtore me to health and ſtrength, if you do not complete the work, and aſſure me that you will be mine.

A Neapolitan veſſel, which is on the moment

moment of departure from this port, bears my orders to forward any letters, that may be now expecting me at Naples, to this place. I flatter myſelf that ſome of them will give me tidings of you; perhaps ſome kind aſſurances, that a life, almoſt miraculouſly preſerved, is deſtined to be happy. If I had no other evil to combat, my impatience would prove a diſeaſe till I hear from you. If, however, after all, my ſufferings ſhould quicken the progreſs of that ſenſibility which your laſt letter expreſſes towards me, I ſhall thank Heaven, every future hour of my life, for having bleſſed me with them.

LETTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

The Anſwer.

MY heart is ſurprized with Comfort, at the moment when it had taken Miſery for its long and laſt companion. I had loſt all expectation of ever hearing from you again:—it was my firm and ſad belief that you were gone where I could be remembered no more. Your reſurrection—for ſuch I muſt conſider it—has given new life to your Iſabella, and ſhe no longer heſitates to tell you, that, if Fortune favours the deſigns of Love, ſhe will be yours. The letters which you will receive from Naples ſay much more; and they muſt plead my excuſe for not being able to give any conſiderable length to this. The duties I have to fulfil, muſt, at this time,

time, be moſt rigorouſly obſerved, to avert the eye of Suſpicion, a demon which continually haunts theſe walls, from a project that I have planned, and of which you will ſhortly be informed. In the mean time, pay every poſſible attention to your health, for her ſake who is ſo deeply intereſted in it;—but write to me no more.—The idea of your ſufferings, my dear friend, is painful beyond deſcription.—Unchriſtian men! ——————But let me turn my thoughts from a ſcene ſo full of horror, and rather bend my knees in gratitude to Heaven for having preſerved you, than be guilty of impious wiſhes againſt barbarians, who, as they know no mercy, will find none.—If I do not expreſs myſelf with the tenderneſs which you might expect, do not imagine that it has ſuffered any diminution in my heart;—

heart;—alas! it encreaſes there, if it can encreaſe, every moment.—This is a time to act: affection muſt now begin to ſhew itſelf in ſomething more than fond expreſſions; and I truſt that my next letter will convince you of my perfect reliance on your fidelity and honour. In the mean time, I beſeech you to neglect no precautions which may re-eſtabliſh and ſecure your health.—You have my permiſſion to live in the hopes that I ſhall employ every hour to haſten the period when you will receive the hand of

ISABELLA.

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LETTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

To the ſame.

AT this ſilent hour, when the inhabitants of theſe walls are at reſt, I enjoy an happineſs which they can never know. I gild the midnight gloom in addreſſing myſelf to you:—my heart ſpeaks as if you were here to anſwer it, and offers up its watchful hours to the object of it.—Having yielded to this effuſion of tenderneſs, which I could not reſiſt, it becomes me now to aſſume another tone. This letter, my friend, demands your moſt ſerious attention. The language of Paſſion, and expreſſions of Regard, muſt ſubmit, at this time, to the ſober dictates of calm Reaſon. The bold and uncommon enterprize I am about to undertake, requires

quires that this ſage oracle ſhould be conſulted. It is neceſſary, before I take the meaſure for which I am preparing, that there ſhould be a clear intelligence between us. It is a duty incumbent on myſelf, it is a duty I owe to you, to enter into ſome conſideration of our reſpective ſituations, as they relate to ourſelves and to each other. Do not imagine, however, that, by this ſerious introduction, I mean to retract my engagement with you;—do not be alarmed with the apprehenſions that I wiſh to check thoſe deſires which I have myſelf encouraged:—on the contrary, you are about to receive the beſt proof I can give that they will be gratified. But it is neceſſary to be explicit in a matter of ſuch importance to us both; and I beg of you not to be offended by my declaration, that nothing leſs than a

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ſolemn public Marriage will ſatisfy me!

I know very well how critical my ſituation will be when I have eſcaped from this Cloiſter, and, which muſt be the immediate conſequence, have taken my flight to another country. I am equally ſenſible how dependent I muſt be upon your honour and juſtice, when I have deprived myſelf of every other protection: but be aſſured, though you poſſeſſed a degree of perfection never yet known to mortals, heightened by all that wealth and power could give you, I would rather paſs my days in the darkneſs and deſpair of a dungeon, than aſſociate myſelf with you in any other character than that of your Wife. Do not, therefore, deceive yourſelf or me. Think not that an intemperate advantage may be taken of an ardent affec-

affection, and a friendleſs ſtate, to force me to wear any other character. The means of life are, ſome way or other, ever open to youth and induſtry; and thoſe arts which I have been taught as the accompliſhments of my rank and ſex, will not fail to give me the bread of Virtue; and, if the loweſt ſervitude were neceſſary to attain it, I would joyfully embrace the rude employment to be preſerved from Infamy.—But from ſuch a neceſſity Friendſhip has already ſecured me.

A woman, however weak ſhe may be by the general rule of Nature, will ſometimes riſe to ſtrength which manhood cannot equal; and ſhe, who will encounter the danger and fatigue which I have determined to meet for your ſake, is equal to the proof of ſuch declarations as I have now offered to you.—But this is not all. The mere forms of marriage

will not content me; it muſt be ſolemnized, not only in the face of the world, but in the preſence of your mother, and all thoſe relations who are intereſted in your happineſs. It is from them, and from them alone, that we muſt receive each other at the altar. My only hopes of real comfort in this world depend on an union with you; but, as that reſts upon my being qualified to compleat yours, I will not, in ſpite of my affections, yield to it, if it ſhould be menaced with the unpropitious omen of parental diſapprobation. Your reaſon cannot but approve theſe ſentiments, which are ſo irrevocable in my breaſt, that, ſhould you venture to combat them, my reſolution is taken to hear from you no more, and to reſign myſelf, without further hopes, to my preſent allotment. The mere wiſh to gratify a violent paſſion is one thing; the

the deſire of ſolid happineſs is another: the former has no conſideration but itſelf; and, for a ſhort-lived pleaſure, makes a willing but fatal ſacrifice of every real comfort and honour of life: the latter, being created by a paſſion which partakes of, and is, indeed, governed by ſentiments of virtue, muſt be accompanied with the proſpect of durable ſatisfaction. You are a young man of no common expectations, poſſeſſed of great wealth, and the object of a moſt tender attention, not only from an anxious parent, but from numerous and honourable friends. Their wiſhes for your proſperity muſt look to a wiſe and ſuitable marriage: this, indeed, from your own account, was the object of their firſt thoughts; and you were brought up from your infancy with the idea of a particular matrimonial connection. On the

contrary, I am the native of a country diſtant from yours, without fortune, without friends, and have bound myſelf by the moſt ſolemn vows to a religious life and eternal celibacy. You muſt ſuppoſe me, alſo, to have broken thoſe vows, which, as far as they relate to me, muſt be regarded as ſacred engagements, even by thoſe whoſe mode of faith declares them to be contrary to the principles of reaſon and juſtice. In this ſituation, and under theſe particular circumſtances, whatever pity might accompany the idea of me in benevolent minds, I ſhould be generally conſidered with little favour: very harſh opinions may be given upon my ſubject; and it would not, I fear, be an eaſy matter to reconcile your marriage with me as prudent and honourable on your part. Gracious Heaven! my intentions may be miſrepreſented,

and,

and, perhaps, my very virtue ſuſpected. At all events I ſhall have much—much diſadvantage to encounter; eſpecially as I have been the cauſe, though the innocent cauſe, of turning you from that connection which has been the object and wiſh of your neareſt friends and relations. Who will believe the honours of my birth? or, if that circumſtance ſhould meet with the credit it deſerves, will it not be ſaid that my conduct has degraded me? General prepoſſeſſions will be againſt me: this I muſt expect, and could be willing for ſome time to bear, becauſe I know the purity of my heart, and that they might be worn away by an exemplary diſcharge of domeſtic duties. The juſtice of mankind might, in time, be favourable to me; and I do not imagine that cruel ſuſpicion would long continue to harraſs me in the character of a

fond, affectionate, and faithful wife. If I was ſo happy as to receive the approbation of your family, I ſhould ſoon, I truſt, be favoured with that of the world.

Such are my ſentiments and principles;—I repeat again that they are unchangeable, and that I ſhall be governed by them alone in the important event which is hanging over me. Be aſſured that I am unſhaken; and if you feel any repugnance to them in your own breaſt, if you know, or even ſuſpect, any oppoſition to them from your own circumſtances and connections, I rely upon your honour, in which I have the greateſt confidence,—I truſt to your heart, which, I firmly believe, cannot be led aſtray from it,—to be explicit with me, and to hide nothing from me in a matter of ſo much importance to us both. In deceiving me, if it were poſſible, you will

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ſadly deceive yourſelf; and in compleating my diſhonour, you will, moſt aſſuredly, promote your own. The very idea of ſeparating you from your family terrifies me; nor would I purchaſe the happineſs of being yours at ſuch a price.

I ſhall now proceed to tell you, that the plan of my eſcape is ſo well formed as not to admit of a doubt of its ſucceſs; but there are conditions to be fulfilled on your part, previous to my putting it in execution. You muſt depart for England as ſoon as your health is re-eſtabliſhed; from thence you will inform me whether the way is prepared for my honourable reception:—when the happy letter arrives which ſhall give me ſuch delightful aſſurances, I will immediately fly from theſe deteſtable walls, and, when I have reached a place of aſſured ſecurity from the danger of purſuit, you ſhall

hear farther from me. Write to me no more, till you can finally determine my fate; whether I am to remain in this Cloiſter to the end of my days, or whether, according to my deſcription, I can be yours. I entreat you to have particular attention to your own perſonal welfare: your happineſs is dear to me as my own. The object, the wiſh, the prayer of my heart, is to make you happy; but, after all, ſhould future events render that impoſſible, it will be a great conſolation to me, during the remainder of my life, that I have not made you miſerable——Adieu!

LETTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

To ISABELLA.

London.

CHARMING Iſabella! I am arrived in my native country; I have ſeen my mother and received her bleſſing; I have embraced my friends and been melted with their kindneſs; and, though many objections aroſe on my imparting the deſign I had formed with reſpect to yourſelf, they were ſoon ſilenced: the picture I drew of you, and the deſire of ſeeing me happy, won their commands to tell you, and I obey them with rapture, that they will receive the fair ſtranger I ſhall preſent to them with a pleaſure equal to my own. You may now, therefore, haſten to put your eſcape in execution; and I have nothing to wiſh, but that your ſucceſs, in compleating it, may be equal

to

to the fond affection which is impatient to crown it. During this important interval, I ſhall be in a ſtate of ſuſpence the moſt painful that can be conceived, from which I truſt and intreat you will not delay a moment to relieve me.

If it were poſſible for my idolatry of you to admit of an higher enthuſiaſm, your laſt letter would have exalted thoſe ſentiments with which your charms and excellence had already inſpired me; but my heart has long attained its height of love and admiration. I cannot but approve your wiſdom, however unneceſſary it may be for you to exert it in framing precautions with reſpect to me. I am, as I ever will remain, faithful to your affections, and the guardian of your honour. I ſhall add new luſtre to the virtues of my family by adding you to it; and, when they ſhall ſee and know you, their preſent

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prepoſſeſſions will grow into the tendereſt regard and affection for you. Wherefore is the hour yet ſo diſtant when I ſhall adorn my country with the faireſt, loveliеſt, and moſt excellent object it ever beheld? Why have I not received your commands to meet you on your way to conduct you hither? Oh, Iſabella! why is the ſolid joy you promiſe me to be ſo ſlow in its completion; and the apprehenſions of danger and fatigue, which may diſtreſs you in your tedious journey, to have ſuch a ſpace for tormenting me? Command me, I beſeech you, to where you ſhall take your firſt repoſe from the hazard of your flight. Who can be ſo qualified to welcome you to liberty as the happy lover the office of whoſe life will be to make it a bleſſing to you? Who can ſo well ſooth your fears, and calm your agitated ſpirits, as he whoſe duty, whoſe honour, whoſe

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ſupreme happineſs it will be, to protect you from every evil throughout your days. You will be unjuſt both to me and to yourſelf, if you refuſe me this ardent requeſt, and prevent the Lover from giving a proof of what he will be, when he is exalted into the happy character of an Huſband. It is abſolutely neceſſary that you ſhould have ſome perſon to protect you during your journey: a female companion cannot be ſufficient; and if any other ſhould attend you, I ſhall be jealous of his charge, and think he robs me of what is now my claim, and mine alone. Think on this, I entreat you; and do not let a falſe delicacy ſubject you to inconveniences and dangers, the very thoughts of which make me tremble.

In the interval of hearing again from you, it will be my happy employment to prepare every comfort and elegance for your

your reception in this land of freedom which love can command and wealth can purchaſe. Bleſſed, truly bleſſed in the poſſeſſion of ſo much excellence, and rich beyond expreſſion in the treaſure which I ſhall have brought from a foreign country to adorn my own, I ſhall ſee, with pride, the envy that will wait upon your ſuperior charms, and watch, with pleaſure, the rapid decay of that malevolent paſſion before your ſuperior virtues. Oh, Iſabella! is it poſſible that I ſhould be ſo happy as to call you mine? I know not how to think that Heaven will ſo compleatly bleſs me:— my paſt life cannot merit pre-eminent delight; it muſt therefore be the duty of my future days to deſerve the bleſſing.

I again implore you to let me meet you on your way; and, in the hope of your compliance with this entreaty, I

ſhall

ſhall be continually prepared for an inſtant departure. A painful impatience will tyrannize over me till I receive that command which will ſpeed my flight to you.—Adieu! May Heaven protect my darling Iſabella!—At this moment, ſurely, I may call her mine.

LETTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

To Mr. CROLI.

Geneva.

I BLESS Heaven, my friend, for having favoured my eſcape and conducted me to a place of ſafety. My reſolution was unſhaken; it ſerved me well in the moment of trial, and the friends in whom I truſted have proved worthy of my confidence—But when I had turned my back upon thoſe deteſtable walls that confined me, my ſpirits failed, and it was with difficulty that nature could be ſuſtained into that degree of ſtrength which was neceſſary for my flight. So long ſhut out from objects of nature and the world, my alarms were unceaſing, and in every being I met my fears beheld a purſuer. The torrent that roared, and the pine that whiſpered, as I paſſed the mountains, filled

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me with equal terror; and I ſuffered anagony during my rapid journey which will demand ſome days of repoſe to overcome. One of the companions of my flight is the female friend who has been ſo faithful to us both, and to whom I had entruſted the wreck of that fortune which the hand of the ſtranger and the rapacity of religion had taken from me.—Her fidelity muſt be rewarded by every exertion of our friendſhip throughout life. The other was the ſexton of the convent, by whoſe means I obtained an eaſy and unſuſpected paſſage from it.—It would have been the moſt horrible ingratitude to have left him behind to all the rage of religious fury, and, amid the cruelties of ſevere puniſhment, to fling his curſes after me. The remains of his life, already far ſpent, it is our duty to cheriſh with every comfort and conſolation.

tion. I doubt not but your wiſhes will equal mine,----for they cannot exceed them,---in aſſuring to theſe important friends whatever they can require of us to make them happy. They have every claim upon our gratitude: the one has ſupplied the place of every friend I have loſt; ſhe has been a ſiſter, —I muſt give her a more affecting title, ſhe has been a mother to me :--and low as his ſtation in life has been, I muſt and ſhall ever conſider the other as my father; and the tender, reſpectful duty, which ſuch a dear relation would deſerve from me, I ſhall never ceaſe to offer to him, nor will you be unprepared to follow an example which your heart muſt ſo well approve.

However ardently I may wiſh, my dear friend, to ſatisfy you in every thing, I cannot, conſiſtent with the principles

which now direct my conduct, yield a conſent to your meeting me on my way. It is the laſt time, I believe, that you will ever find me heſitate to manifeſt a moſt eager obedience to your will and pleaſure; yet a little while, and I ſhall be moſt fondly ſubſervient to them. As ſoon as I find myſelf, in ſome degree, recovered, I ſhall ſet forward for Rouen, in Normandy; the carriage which is to convey us thither is already hired. I muſt beg of you, therefore, on the receipt of this letter, to diſpatch ſome confidential, truſty perſon, to meet me there, who ſpeaks our language as well as yours, in order to conduct me to the happy concluſion of my journey: but I forbid, abſolutely forbid you to accompany him; and I poſitively inſiſt that you will not preſent yourſelf to me till I am arrived at my final deſtination.

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I am in a ſituation of the utmoſt delicacy: great indeed muſt be my ſenſe of it, when it governs my affections ſo far as to ſhackle with form and ceremony the approach of that happineſs which awaits me. But I feel the abſolute neceſſity of giving every mark of decency and good ſenſe that the nature of my conduct will bear. It is my duty to give ſomething of character to a proceeding, which, as the world is obliged to conſider things, will even juſtify ſuſpicion.

I thank you, from my heart, for all the zeal which you expreſs for my happineſs, and feel a moſt flattering ſatisfaction at the pleaſure you manifeſt in making preparations for my reception; but nothing will afford me ſo much delight on my arrival in London as to find your mother there to receive

me, and hear from her lips the welcome aſſurance that ſhe will ſoon be mine. Without this circumſtance, the pleaſure even of ſeeing you will have its interruption, and I ſhall be diſſatisfied. Do not be diſpleaſed at my recurring ſo often to this object of my ambition: if you know any thing of the human heart, it will appear to you in its true light, as the moſt inconteſtable proof of my perfect attachment to you. How muſt that woman love, who, born to a rank which no one can deſpiſe, conſcious of her innocence, and enamoured of virtue, ſhould ſubmit to a ſituation which may make the purity of her intentions ſuſpected! You will tell me, my dear friend, that I ought not to ſuffer the doubt of a moment to overſhadow my peace; but ſuch is the trembling ſtate of my mind, that

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I have ſcarce a moment's repoſe. Do not blame me for a ſolicitude ſo flattering to you.—Alas! I have no fears but that I ſhould not be thought worthy of you.

LETTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

To ISABELLA.

London.

HOW I envy, my deareſt Iſabella, the bearer of this paper! He will ſee and converſe with you long before it will be my happy fortune. I repine at your commands, but I obey them. You are the miſtreſs of my preſent as well as future fate; and from you will the reſt of my days receive their every ſhade of happineſs, from the gentleſt glow of common reciprocation to the higheſt flight of human bliſs.

The gentleman who will have the honour to preſent this letter to you, is a perſon in whom you may confide; he is your countryman, and has long profeſſed, with credit, the buſineſs of teaching

ing the modern European languages in this kingdom. He will have the happineſs to inſtruct you in that to which you are to be naturalized. If the winds therefore ſhould prove unfavourable, or you ſhould think a few days repoſe neceſſary before you paſs the ſea, you may amuſe yourſelf with beginning your leſſons where I truſt and hope you now are. I have ordered him, the moment you arrive in England, to ſend a courier forward to inform me of the happy tidings, that I may be ready to receive and welcome you to freedom, to love, and to me. This event is the ſubject of all my thoughts; it accompanies me through the day, and I only ſleep to dream of it.

I have never ſeen you but in the uncomely dreſs of your religious ſtate; how then will my heart be enraptured

when I ſee my penſive nun transformed into a woman of the world, and poſſeſſing every power of diſplaying thoſe graces to the utmoſt advantage, which were divine under every diſadvantage of dreſs, and when ſeen through a grated window. I know not how I ſhall bear the ſight; the very idea throws a thrilling pleaſure through my heart that is almoſt inſupportable. Yet a little while, and this dream ſhall be realized, and I ſhall be moſt bleſſed. Speed on, ye ſluggiſh hours! and bring the golden moment with you. Blow, ye favourable gales! and waft her ſmoothly o'er the main. May no danger overtake or trouble her with the leaſt alarm! and may ſhe arrive ſoon and ſafe on that happy ſhore where Love waits to receive her, and make her happy with all it can beſtow!

The friends you bring with you ſhall be mine; they will have no reaſon to complain of my ingratitude. I owe them every thing, for they will give me every thing my heart deſires; they will give me you. They ſhall ſhare my regard and my fortune; and I truſt there will not be a moment of their future lives when repentance will accompany a thought of their friendſhip to us. When you ſhall repeat to them the aſſurances of your grateful kindneſs, let mine attend and confirm them.

Let your mind be at reſt, I beſeech you. How is it poſſible for us to doubt of our mutual love! We are in this world for no other purpoſe but to enjoy it. Delicious ſource of my exiſtence! I ſhould not have poſſeſſed the heart I have, but to be full of your idea; nor would you have poſſeſſed

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ſuch a ſoul, if it was not to love me: and it is only to love you as long as you are lovely, and to receive the return of my paſſion as long as you are beloved, that Heaven has made us ſo capable of loving each other.

This letter will be, perhaps, the laſt I ſhall ever write to you, as I hope never to ſuſtain ſo long an abſence from you as to make ſuch a meſſenger of my heart neceſſary; nevertheleſs, I cannot lengthen it, as I am jealous of every moment that ſeparates me from you, and the bearer of it waits but for my concluſion to ſpeed it towards you. Adieu, my deareſt Iſabella!--but it ſhall be the laſt time I will ever offer ſuch a farewel to you, till Fate commands, and I muſt ſay adieu for ever!

LETTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

To Mr. CROLI.

London.

I RISE from my pillow, which you have covered with the ſharpeſt thorns, to write this letter; and, if it ſhould arrive before you have quitted yours, you may begin to find it uneaſy to you. It is time that I ſhould have ſome deciſive proof of your honourable intentions towards me. My mind has of late found great reaſon to be alarmed concerning my ſituation. I have been in this city ſeveral weeks, and have never ſeen or heard from your mother or any of your relations. Your early excuſes were received by me without ſuſpicion: the tenderneſs of my regard was willing to believe them, and the novelty, as well as variety of gay and

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magnificent ſcenes to which I have been ſo carefully conducted, ſerved to diſſipate my attention; but I am at length awakened from the delirium in which a ſtrange infatuation had ſo long kept me.—To my infinite agony and aſtoniſhment, I have been informed, by indubitable circumſtances, that, in the world, I bear the title of your miſtreſs. I ſent immediately to you, to obtain ſome ſerious converſation with you on a matter of ſuch importance to me, but you were not to be found. Unable to ſleep, though bleſſed with a compoſure of ſpirits that aſtoniſhes me, I ſhall paſs the remainder of the night in calling to your recollection the vows that you made, and the ſituation into which a confidence in their truth has led me. My eyes are now opened to a variety of circumſtances which I had not be-

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fore obſerved: alas! they all confirm my fears, and give a clear but ſad proſpect of my deplorable ſituation.

In all my converſations with you, ſince my arrival in England, you ſeemed to poſſeſs a diffidence, which, at the time, I approved, as appearing to proceed from reſpectful affection, and that delicacy which might be expected from ſuch a mind as I have hitherto conceived yours to be: but I now ſuſpect it to have been no more than the endeavour to conceal a diſtreſs, ariſing from ſome ſecret wiſh, or ſome hidden deſign, that you have not dared to avow. Theſe apprehenſions are confirmed by the conduct of that perſon, who, on your particular recommendation, has been ſo continually with me. His aſſiduous attentions, obliging manners, apparent attachment to you; your declaration of

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his integrity, and my paſſing the greateſt part of every day with him, from an eager deſire to be inſtructed in your language; made me reſpect him ſo far as to repoſe no ſmall degree of confidence in him,---a confidence, of which I now perceive he has availed himſelf, to offer to me, from time to time, a looſe ſyſtem of morality, which I did not rightly underſtand, and of which I did not at once ſee or ſuſpect the object. For ſome days paſt he has grown more bold in his opinions; and the diſcovery I have made has opened my eyes alſo to his conduct, which I now conſider as a preface to ſome diſhonourable propoſal from you, of which he was to be the meſſenger. He will be admitted to me no more; and I deſire to ſee you without delay, that my fears may be entirely removed, or fully confirmed.

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If your mother is in that infirm ſtate of health which you have repreſented as an excuſe for her delaying to come to me, there has been no reaſon aſſigned why I ſhould not pay my viſit of reſpect to her. I am in health, and would travel barefooted to her, with pleaſure, wherever ſhe may be: a pilgrimage to her bed-ſide would be delightful to me, as I might then, by every act of kind attention, anticipate the duties of a daughter. But, alas! the hiſtory of her illneſs is a mere invention to deceive me;—and is it poſſible that you can have planned that and many other deceptions which have been contrived to undo me!

I am diſpoſed to believe that you have loved me; at leaſt, it is at preſent my intereſt to encourage ſuch a belief: ---perhaps you may love me ſtill; but, I fear,

fear, your affection for me does not reign, as it ought, the ſole miſtreſs of your heart; ſome predominant intereſt, ſome ſecret views, riſe ſuperior to it, and am I deſtined to be the victim! —That can never be; I am not deſtitute, and a reſolution awakened by wounded honour, as well as injured love, will find reſources that cannot enter into your comprehenſion. Revenge does not belong to my nature, and I have loved you with that noble, diſintereſted paſſion which forbids me to wiſh that any ill may befal you: but I ſhall ſupport the dignity of my character to the laſt; and, though the world may look cool upon me, I poſſeſs the means of preſerving myſelf from my own reproach. A conſcious innocence could alone ſuſtain me beneath the ſeverity of thoſe calumnies which have been ſo falſely,

falſely, and, I fear, ſo generally uttered againſt me: if you do not immediately and publicly prove their falſehood, I am reſolved to take the unwelcome taſk upon myſelf, and will proſecute my painful but neceſſary purpoſe without delay.

There is a dignity in the diſtreſs of virtue which elevates the heart amidſt all its oppreſſions; that dignity is mine, and dictates a language which I little thought it would be my lot to addreſs to you. I command your immediate declaration of your future intentions concerning me. In telling you of my fears and ſuſpicions I do not accuſe you; and by removing them for ever you may aſſert your innocence: but, in my preſent ſituation, patience will have but a ſhort exiſtence; a ſingle evaſion, or a propoſition of delay, on

your part, will at once confirm my fears and determine my conduct. My tongue has not been accuſtomed to reproach, and my ſoul ſoars above the malice of revenge. If you can ſhield yourſelf from the accuſations of your own heart, it will be well for you; for you have nothing to fear from mine. If the ſight of one whoſe wrongs cry aloud againſt you, would awaken your fears and trouble your ſpirit, be at reſt,—you ſhall ſee her no more!

LETTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

To ISABELLA.

I AM in a ſtate of agonizing confuſion which is not to be expreſſed. Believe me, Iſabella! my love for you is of the tendereſt nature, and I would ſacrifice every thing to make you happy. But, alas! I cannot ſanctify our union with that conſent which you unfortunately conſider as eſſential to it. My heart is and ever will be yours; my fortune is at your command; but I cannot ſoften the flinty obſtinacy of their breaſts, who remain inflexible to my wiſhes.—I have deceived you—and acknowledge it in the bitterneſs of ſorrow and remorſe; but I thought the deception innocent, and that your reſolution might be ſoftened to receive the eternal conſtancy of him you

loved without ſhackling it with parental or any other reſtraint. You have a better ſecurity for it in the power of your charms, and the commanding ſuperiority of your character, than in any ceremony which man may have invented from motives of intereſt inſtead of love. My fortune can ſurround you with a ſplendor which will attract the envy and admiration of the firſt people in this kingdom; and, if you will accept it, you may leave them as far behind in figure and enjoyment as you do in beauty and underſtanding. Nor can I make ſo happy an uſe of the wealth which Heaven has ſo profuſely ſcattered around me, as to purchaſe every gratification you can deſire: nay, I will put it out of my power to revoke ſuch a completion of my wiſhes, by making a legal ſettlement upon you, which ſhall afford you a noble proviſion,

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and certain independence of myſelf and every one. Periſh the thought of binding you by any ties but the ſilken ones of tender paſſion!—Such, I truſt, will yet unite us to each other; and that thoſe ill-founded ſcruples which proceed from the infectious walls where you were incloſed will ſoon be removed by the purifying air of the world.—I moſt inviolably promiſe to be faithful to you; that no other object ſhall have the leaſt ſhare in my affections; and that, as you are the ſovereign miſtreſs of them at this moment, you ſhall continue to command them to the laſt hour of my exiſtence.—Do not ſhudder, my Iſabella! at the life of love which awaits you; haſten to enjoy it; and make him, whom you have ſupremely honoured with your affections, the happieſt and moſt bleſſed of human beings.—The virtue of love

's fidelity;—and may every anguiſh that can torture human nature overtake me when I prove unfaithful to you!

Some affairs of very great importance call me immediately into the country. I go, indeed, with a mind ill-calculated for the arrangements which are foreign to thoſe of the heart: but I live in hopes, that, ere my return, the amiable but romantic enthuſiaſm, which now poſſeſſes you, will have yielded to the reſolution of being as happy as wealth and love can make you.——Be not, Iſabella! an enemy to your own happineſs;—and do not blot the tender expectations of your moſt fond and ever-affectionate

C——.

LETTER THE TWENTY-NINTH.

To Mrs. CROLI.

THIS letter, Madam, which is written by one who is a ſtranger to you, may occaſion your ſurprize, as I believe it will awaken your ſenſibility.—There was a time, indeed, when I flattered, vainly flattered myſelf, that I ſhould have addreſſed you in another character, and that, in your face, I ſhould have ſeen the lineaments of a mother. But this, with many other pleaſing expectations, is vaniſhed for ever; and a life, which once promiſed a ſplended happineſs, muſt be paſſed in the gloom of diſcontent and ſorrow.

Born of one of the firſt families in Tuſcany, I had the misfortune to loſe

my parents at a time when the ardent wiſhes of their hearts began to be anſwered in me, and the labour of aſſiduous education was not without promiſe of reward. A brother, who would in ſome degree have ſupplied their place, ſoon followed them to the tomb; and I was left to the ſole care of an aged relation, who loved me with real tenderneſs, and purſued the plan of inſtruction which my father had begun. At the end of three years ſhe was alſo ſnatched ſuddenly from me, when, to avoid the horrors of an odious marriage, and to gain an aſylum from the threats of a rapacious but powerful kindred who claimed my inheritance, I entered into a convent, and, in the due courſe of time, took thoſe vows which were to ſeparate me for ever from the world. There I remained ſtruggling with diſcontent, and endeavouring to find

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a cure for my ſorrows in the offices of religious duty. My rank, however, was reſpected; I received every indulgence that the ſtate I had embraced would allow me; my conduct won me the affectionate regards of the ſiſterhood; and I was verging towards ſome degree of contentment, when, at a public ceremony of admitting a lady into her noviciate with us, I firſt beheld your ſon. It was impoſſible for me to avoid obſerving his particular attentions; his eyes were riveted to me, and ſeemed to pierce my very heart. Though I felt a riſing vanity at this event, it would ſoon have paſſed away, had I not received, in a very few days, a written declaration of his paſſion. That declaration, and every letter which has paſſed between us, you will receive with this: they will tell you, Madam,

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in language which I muſt ſtrive to remember no more, the progreſs of our loves, the conſequence of them, and the final cauſe of this addreſs to you.

I ſhall not trouble you with a detail of that affection which will be the misfortune and ſcourge of my future days:—the papers which accompany this letter, if you ſhould deign to read them, will communicate the ardor of my paſſion, and the right I had to expect the moſt generous returns from that of your ſon. Permit me, however, to mention, that a ſolemn public marriage, ſanctified by your approbation, was the condition upon which I undertook the hazardous enterprize of flying from the convent, and haſtening to this kingdom. On my arrival here, Mr. Croli treated me with a moſt flattering and reſpectful attention,

and

and offered thoſe excuſes for your delay in viſiting me, which my credulous affection made me willing to believe.—At length, however, my eyes were opened; and I awoke to all the horrors of my deplorable ſituation—I diſcovered that my virtue was not merely ſuſpected, but abſolutely loſt in the public opinion; and that I was intended to be the dupe of Mr. Croli's future artifice, in order to become the very abominable character with which common fame had already diſgraced me. —It was now time to enter upon a poſitive explanation: I wrote, therefore, to your ſon on the ſubject in terms of the deepeſt affliction; and he returned the anſwer which you will read, wherein he throws off the maſk at once, and makes an open and moſt daring propoſal to me to become his miſtreſs.—It really aſtoniſhes me that the moment of reading

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the paper, whereon the infamous propoſition was written, did not prove my laſt! —Alas! ſuch an event would have been merciful to me.—But Heaven inſpires me with ſtrength to bear my preſent griefs, that it may inflict upon me its future puniſhment.———In this ſtate, Madam, with all the tortures of diſappointed affection, with all the pangs of wounded honour, and the angry ſmart of inſulted love, I had to expect the bitter reproaches of thoſe who accompanied my flight: but my deſpair was not yet to be accompliſhed; and their tender conſolations ſuſtained me into exiſtence. They were the means of my eſcape, have been the companions of my danger, and were to have been rewarded by a ſhare in my happineſs; but diſappointment, inſtead of allaying, gave new force to their friendſhip, and they have given me, in my

my adverſe ſtate, thoſe proofs of affection which it is not in the honours and proſperity of this world to reward.

There was, fortunately for me, in this alarming exigence, one perſon of whom I could aſk advice and aſſiſtance, and he has proved himſelf a friend indeed. This gentleman is a Mr. L ———, an Italian merchant of eminence and reſpect, whom I had occaſion to ſee on my firſt arrival in this kingdom. To the female friend who accompanied me hither, I had long ago entruſted the little treaſure which was ſaved from the injuſtice of relations and the rapacity of the convent; of this ſhe was a faithful ſteward. Previous to our quitting Italy, ſhe joined her little fortune to it, and procured letters of credit to Mr. L———, to whoſe care the whole of it was conſigned on our arrival in England. As I was determined never to receive any

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thing from your ſon till he had given me a nuptial intereſt in his poſſeſſions, it became a matter of neceſſity to pay occaſional viſits to this gentleman:—he appeared to be a man of amiable diſpoſitions; and I truſted to that appearance in deſiring to ſee him as my only reſource in the unexpected and ſad dilemma wherein I found myſelf. He kindly haſtened to grant my requeſt, and, without any heſitation or reſerve on my part, I told him the all of my ſad hiſtory, declared to him my reſolution of returning to the walls that I had abandoned, and braving the rigours that would meet me there;—— and entreated his aſſiſtance to point out to me the moſt ready means of compleating my purpoſe.——My ſtory melted him into tears; and, after much kind endeavour, on his part, to turn me from my deſign, as well as a thouſand friendly offers

offers of ſervice, finding that I was irrevocably determined, at all events, to bid an immediate farewel to this country, he perſuaded me not to throw myſelf into the angry power of my former ſiſterhood, nor add to the miſeries of my life by tempting the pious fury of their puniſhment.—I liſtened to his humane counſels, and, before this letter reaches you, ſhall be proceeding on my way to a retirement which he will not diſcover, and where I may reflect without interruption on the future diſpoſition of my days.——This, Madam, is a ſhort hiſtory of myſelf to the moment when I have the honour of addreſſing myſelf to you: I intend it only as a kind of outline which the correſpondence between your ſon and myſelf will fill up, and as an introduction to

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a few ſhort obſervations, and one poor requeſt, which will conclude it.

I am worthy of the honour, Madam, to which I aſpired, of being your daughter. Permit me to ſay that my affection for Mr. C—— was of that nature as to have moſt deeply intereſted me in every relation and concern of his. His friend would have been my friend:—his mother would have been my mother; and I ſhould have conſidered it as the pride of my life to have adminiſtered, by every affectionate duty, by every kind attention, to the comfort of yours.——His wealth had no influence upon my heart: what I thought a rare ſuperiority of character won me to him; and, if foul fortune had made him poor, my fidelity would never have ſhrunk, but moſt willingly ſhared his poverty with him. This I may now aſſert without vanity, or

without

without being accuſed of views from whoſe gratification I am already removed.—What I have aſſerted is the truth: ——your ſon knows it to be ſo, and will hereafter acknowledge it.

I can have no motives to make theſe declarations, but ſuch as my heart tells me are juſt;——for, if your ſon were, at this moment, to offer on his knees, and with that affecting language which won my love, to fulfil his former vows, though you, his venerable parent, were to enforce his entreaties with your own, I call a juſt God to witneſs that I would refuſe it all!——The inſult he has offered to me has rendered him unworthy of me; and there is no miſery I would not ſuffer with pleaſure, rather than be united to the man who has harboured the intentions to injure my honour, and to hold me forth to the world as an un-

chaſte name.——If this is the language of Pride,——it is that Pride which is the beſt protector of Virtue.

I do not, indeed I do not, quit all my fond hopes of happineſs without a regret that I cannot deſcribe, and which, I ſtill love the author of my miſery ſo well, as to wiſh that he may never feel. I ſuffer for my credulity, the offspring of a blind and fatal paſſion; and the pangs it has riveted in my heart, will, I fear, remain there till I am no more. My honour is ſtill my own; I poſſeſs the purity of a fair fame, tho' calumny has endeavoured to rob me of it; and I entreat you, Madam, whenever it may be in your power, to do me juſtice.——Alas! I little thought that the only letter I ſhould ever addreſs to you would be of this melancholy nature:——I little thought that a neceſſary act

of

of ſelf-juſtification from me would ever be hoſtile to your repoſe, and wound your parental affections. I had hoped to be the comfort of your declining years, and I am forced by a ſad neceſſity to give them a ſubject for lamentation. Why did I live to this hour! and wherefore have I ſtrength to ſurvive it!- Muſt my firſt addreſs to you be the laſt! and at the moment I approach you, as it were, for the firſt time, muſt I ſay, Adieu for ever!---But ſuch is the will of inexorable Fate!—-Cheriſh the idea of me, I beſeech you, with kindneſs, for I deſerve it; and reflect with pity on the unfortunate

ISABELLA.

LETTER THE THIRTIETH.

To Mr. CROLI.

IF your own conſcience does not make you tremble at the ſight of this letter, you may peruſe its contents without apprehenſion; it will contain neither accuſation nor reproach, and is the laſt you will ever receive from me. Indeed, I ſhould not have troubled you with an adieu, but to inform you that I ſhall be far away before it will reach you; and that, if by chance you ſhould be diſpoſed to diſcover the path I have taken, and to purſue me, your labour will be in vain. I have already given you ſufficient proofs of a reſolution which is capable of maintaining its purpoſe in ſpite of any fatigue or danger; and I think it my duty to aſſure you,

you, that neither the powers nor temptations of this world will be able to ſhake it for a moment. I call Heaven to witneſs, whom I have offended, and whoſe future wrath I ſhall endeavour to deprecate by immediate atonement, that I never will, if I can prevent it, ſee or hear from you again:—but, if a too curious imprudence ſhould obtrude you upon me in the retreat whither I am haſtening, know, Sir, that you will hear nothing there but the reproach of inſulted virtue; you will find nothing there but a determined purpoſe to turn my back for ever on the man who has ſo baſely injured me: and though he were to renew every former declaration; though he were ready to ſanctify, in the moſt ſacred manner, his former engagements; he would find a ſteady and inflexible denial, which nothing

can overcome. I deſire you, therefore, to ſpare me, as well as yourſelf, the pain and mortification of ſuch an interview. There can be no occaſion for your adding another pang to that heart which has already ſuffered more than I thought it would be ever able to ſuſtain. You may as well attempt to command the winds; the ocean's raging tide would be as obedient to your will as my purpoſe; and may the protection of Heaven eternally forſake me whenever I ſhall change it!—I truſt you know me too well to entertain the faineſt hope of ſuch an event.

What have I not done for your ſake! I expoſed myſelf to the reſentment of my country, and to the ſeverity of its laws againſt perſons of my habit. I put my life to the hazard, and ſought a diſtant nation to which I was a ſtranger, to

make

make you happy; and what has been my reward?—A wounded reputation and your ingratitude.—Heavens! that you, who knew ſo well the bottom of my heart, ſhould treat me in this manner!—Have you never reflected on your conduct towards me? Have you forgot all ſenſe of obligation to me?—Alas! your proceedings have not been thoſe of a generous mind, or of an honeſt man.—I do not wiſh to know the ſucceſs of this letter: if it depends upon me, I ſhall never know it; nor will you, I hope, poſſeſs the power to trouble the condition which I prepare for myſelf.

I have already written to your mother a general account of the beginning, progreſs, and ſad concluſion of our acquaintance with each other; to her poſſeſſion are alſo conſigned all the letters you have written to me, with the copies of thoſe

which you received from my hand: but do not imagine that I adopted ſuch a meaſure from any motive but my own juſtification. I thought it right to depoſit my fair name with the mother of him who wiſhed to deſtroy it.—You will dare not to violate her ſacred protection.

Leonora, that firm friend whoſe fidelity, I truſt, Heaven will one day reward, ſeems to attach herſelf more cloſely to me in the hour of my preſent adverſity. She is reſolved to ſhare my fate, whatever it may be. I am not bereft of every worldly conſolation, when ſuch a friend yet remains. The poor old man, who left his native home for my ſake, and ſuffered his age to repoſe on thoſe promiſes of reward which I cannot now fulfil, has found a protector who has promiſed to give him bread and cheriſh him during the few years of his remaining life.

life. For his ſake I requeſt you alſo to watch over his repoſe and contentment. You know the claims he has upon you, and I wiſh to be the only victim of your injuſtice.

That I have loved you with the moſt ardent ſincerity, your own heart will bear me witneſs:—perhaps I may never ceaſe to love you. A paſſion ſuch as mine, which has mingled with every principle of my nature, and become, as it were, a part of my exiſtence, will not be eaſily extinguiſhed:—but be that as it may, it is nothing to my preſent purpoſe; and the very ſentiments with which this paſſion may torment my boſom, will act as powerful motives to confirm my reſolution of never ſeeing you again. Who could have thought that the fair proſpect of our early love would have been ſo ſoon obſcured, and that your

your boaſted affection would have given ſuch proofs of its ſincerity!—But we muſt, in future, be ſtrangers to each other; we muſt know one another no more. This is a farewel for ever!—That you may be happy is the prayer of my heart; and may ſhe, who ſucceeds to my right in your affections, equal me in love, and receive in return that conſtancy which was due to

ISABELLA!

LETTER THE THIRTY-FIRST.

To Mrs. CROLI.

IT is not now neceſſary to tell you the particulars of that cruel act of injuſtice which bears ſo heavy on the guilty perpetrator, that he is not able to ſuſtain it. You have, I find, been fully informed of my paſſion for the firſt and beſt of women; you well know the unparalleled proofs ſhe has given me of her affection, and the more than barbarous returns I have made to it. My happineſs is vaniſhed for ever!—Worſe than clouds and darkneſs hang over me, and the tortures of a wounded ſpirit have overtaken me. I might have been the happieſt and beſt of men —I am the moſt wretched and worſt of beings; and the ills of my fortune are aggra-

aggravated by an agony of guilt which is intolerable. Hope is loſt for ever; the reign of Deſpair is already commenced, and I will not ſupport it. Your ſon muſt be the victim of his own injuſtice. He has ſome ſenſe of honour left, and that ſhall redeem the infamy of his name.—I cannot live!—Pity and forgive me, Madam; for ere you read theſe unwelcome lines, I ſhall have well revenged the injured Iſabella's wrongs:—my own hand is ready to appeaſe her, and, in a few minutes, I ſhall be no more! It will ſurely be a leſſer evil to you that I ſhould be at once in my grave, than be bearing in my heart a fierce corroding poiſon, whoſe ſluggiſh tortures would at length lead me to it. The laſt act of duty which I can perform to you, is to ſave you the pain of ſeeing me linger through the ſad pro-

greſs

greſs of deſpair and madneſs. Your aged eyes ſhall not behold your favourite child ſtretched on the rack of pain which threatens him:—he will diſappoint Sorrow of its cruel aim. The agonies of years have ruſhed into this hour; and the ſharpneſs of its ſufferings will, I truſt, compenſate in the eye of Mercy for the ſcene which I am preparing. — Farewel, thou beſt and kindeſt parent!—Iſabella! thou lovelieſt and moſt exalted of thy ſex, thou moſt injured woman, adieu!—Receive my dying ſighs;—they are yours!—yet a little while, and the laſt will have eſcaped me!

Here theſe Letters conclude; but a note is added to compleat the hiſtory. Iſabella arrived ſafe at Naples, in the vicinity of which

which city ſhe lived unknown, till, by the intereſt of Mr. C— —'s friends, the Britiſh Court interfered in her behalf, and in conſequence of it the Pope ordered her admiſſion into an abbey in the Neapolitan dominions, where ſhe and her friend retired together. The old man was taken into the family of the Italian Merchant, who has been mentioned with ſuch deſerved reſpect. To this gentleman Iſabella wrote a letter ſome years after ſhe had quitted England, to thank him, once more, for all his kindneſs to her; to aſſure him that ſhe was perfectly reſigned to her ſituation, and had every reaſon to bleſs Heaven, for having in its wiſdom ſnatched her from a world, in which ſhe ſhould not have enjoyed her preſent well-grounded hopes and contented diſpoſitions. She had never been made acquainted with the fatal method which Mr. C— — had employed to avenge her wrongs, and, happily for her, at this day remains ignorant of it.

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THE END.

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